

What You Need to Know...



Anxiety Disorders

What is Anxiety?

We all know what it's like to feel anxious – the butterflies in your stomach before a first date, the tension you feel when your boss is angry, and the way your heart pounds if you're in danger. Anxiety can help you face a threatening situation, and may even help you cope with stress. However, if you have an anxiety disorder, these feelings can cause a lot of problems in your life. Anxiety disorders aren't just nerves, they're illnesses.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Phobias

Phobias are the most common type of anxiety disorder. Phobias aren't just extreme fears; they're irrational fears. A *specific phobia* is a fear of a certain object or situation, such as dogs. A *social phobia* is a fear of being embarrassed in a social setting.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

This disorder happens after a very scary or terrifying experience. The event may have caused the person to think they were going to die. It may be a war, a natural disaster, an accident, abuse or witnessing abuse. It also may be something the person saw, such as an act of terrorism.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is when a person worries way too much. They may also have depression or substance abuse problems. People with this disorder may worry a lot about health, money, family or work. People with GAD can't get over their worries, even when they know they are worrying too much.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD) is when a person has repetitive, upsetting thoughts. The person also does rituals – doing something over and over. People obsessed with germs wash their hands over and over. Other people might check things over and over – like locking a door. The thoughts are called obsessions, and the rituals are called compulsions.

Panic Disorder

Panic Disorder causes intense fear. It can happen very suddenly. The person may have a pounding heart, tingling or numb hands, feel sweaty, weak and faint. They may have chest pain and think something really bad is going to happen. They may think they are having a heart attack or stroke. Attacks can happen any time, even while sleeping.

Getting Help for Anxiety Disorders

A visit to your family doctor or mental health professional is the best place to start. A doctor can help you see if your symptoms are from an anxiety disorder, a medical problem, or both. Your doctor may have you see a mental health professional. Psychiatrists generally treat anxiety disorders with therapy and medication. Most anxiety disorders get better with treatment.

www.mhawisconsin.org

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Free Mental Health Screenings

Mental Health America of Wisconsin offers mental health screenings via telephone at 414.276.3122 or online at www.mhawisconsin.org.

For more information about anger or other mental health issues or support groups, visit our website at www.mhawisconsin.org, or call (414) 276-3122.

Mental Health America of Wisconsin is a United Way of Greater Milwaukee Agency.



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