

# Anxiety Disorders

Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. You might feel anxious when faced with a problem at work, before taking a test, or making an important decision. For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can worsen over time. These feelings can interfere with daily activities such as job performance, school work, and relationships. There are several different types of anxiety disorders. Examples include Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD), Panic Disorder, Phobias, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), Obsessive Compulsive Disorders (OCD), and Social Anxiety Disorder.

## Treatment and Therapies

Anxiety disorders are generally treated with psychotherapy (“talk therapy”), medication, or both. To be effective, psychotherapy must be directed at the person’s specific anxieties and tailored to his or her needs. A typical “side effect” of psychotherapy is temporary discomfort involved with thinking about confronting feared situations.

**Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)** - is a type of psychotherapy that can help people with anxiety disorders. It teaches a person different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to anxiety-producing and fearful situations. CBT can also help people learn and practice social skills, which is vital for treating social anxiety disorder. CBT includes exposure therapy, in which you gradually encounter the object or situation that triggers your anxiety so you build confidence that you can manage the situation and anxiety symptoms.

Stress management, relaxation, and Mindfulness/meditation techniques can help people with anxiety disorders manage interfering symptoms and may enhance the effects of therapy.

## Medications

Medication does not cure anxiety disorders but often relieves symptoms. Below are the most common classes of

## Signs and Symptoms

- Restlessness or feeling wound-up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
- Irritability
- Muscle tension
- Difficulty controlling worry
- Sleep problems (difficulty falling or staying asleep or restlessness, unsatisfying sleep)
- Sudden and repeated attacks of intense fear
- Feeling very self-conscious in front of other people and worried about feeling humiliated, embarrassed, or rejected, or fearful of offending others
- Feelings of panic being out of control

medications used to combat anxiety disorders are:

- **Antidepressants** - may help improve the way your brain uses certain chemicals that control mood or stress. Antidepressants may take several weeks to start working and may cause side effects.
- **Anti-Anxiety Medications** – help reduce the symptoms of anxiety, panic attacks, or extreme fear and worry. The most common anti-anxiety medications are called benzodiazepines.
- **Beta-Blockers** – helpful in the treatment of the physical symptoms of anxiety, especially social anxiety. Prescribers recommend them to control rapid heartbeat, shaking, trembling, and blushing in anxious situations.

Choosing the right medication, medication dose, and treatment plan should be based on a person’s needs and medical situation, and done under an expert’s care. Only an expert clinician can help you decide whether the medication’s ability to help is worth the risk of a side effect. Your prescriber may try several medicines before finding the right one.

## You and your prescriber should discuss:

- How well medications are working or might work to improve your symptoms
- Benefits and side effects of each medication
- Risk for serious side effects based on your medical history
- The likelihood of the medications requiring lifestyle changes
- Costs of each medication
- Other alternative therapies, medications, vitamins, and supplements you are taking and how these may affect your treatment
- How the medication should be stopped? Some drugs can’t be stopped abruptly but must be tapered off slowly under a doctor’s supervision.



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# ANXIETY DISORDERS

## Beyond Treatment: Things You Can Do

Here are other tips that may help you or a loved one during treatment for anxiety disorders:

- Practice relaxation techniques like yoga, meditation and/or listening to music
- Limit alcohol and caffeine
- Tell friends and family you're feeling overwhelmed, and let them know how they can help
- Be sure to get enough sleep
- Exercise can help you feel good and maintain your help
- Write in a journal when you're feeling stressed or anxious, and look for patterns on what triggers your anxiety
- Continue to educate yourself about Anxiety.

## If you are thinking about harming yourself or thinking about suicide:

- Tell someone who can help right away
- Call your licensed mental health professional if you are already working with one
- Call your prescriber
- Go to the nearest hospital emergency department

## For Immediate Help

If you are worried that you or someone you love needs help now, call one of the following 24/7 hotlines that specialize in providing emergency and crisis services in Western New York:

### Erie County

(Crisis Services of Erie County)  
(716) 834-3131

### Buffalo & Erie County

(24 Hour Addiction Hotline)  
(716) 831-7007

### Niagara County

(Niagara County Crisis Hotline)  
(716) 285-3515

### Genesee County

(Care + Crisis Helpline):  
(585) 344-4400  
or 1-844-345-4400

## If a loved one is considering suicide

Here are other tips that may help you or a loved one during treatment for anxiety disorders:

- Do not leave him or her alone
- Try to get your loved one to seek immediate help from a medical professional or the nearest hospital emergency room, or call 911
- Remove access to firearms or other potential tools for suicide, including medications

## Where can I find more information about anxiety disorders?

### MedlinePlus

National Library of Medicine:

<http://medlineplus.gov>

En Español:

<http://medlineplus.gov/spanish>

### National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH)

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov>



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