Anxiety disorders

Anxiety disorders are a common concern for many of us. In fact, some type of anxiety will affect nearly 30% of U.S. adults at some point in our lives. The good news is proper diagnosis and treatment of these conditions help most people overcome their anxiety and live productive lives.



Many of us feel anxious from time to time.

We may be nervous, or even fearful, about a project at work or when making an important personal decision. We may experience a rapid heart rate when speaking in public or feel uneasy in crowds or by ourselves in an unfamiliar place. These are all common sensations, and like our stress responses, anxiety can give us a boost of energy and make us more alert and better able to react to dangerous situations.

But for those with anxiety disorders, the feelings of dread or restlessness don't go away and may get worse over time.

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The symptoms of anxiety disorders may be grouped into three categories:



GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

This is the most common type of anxiety disorder. People with GAD worry excessively about relatively ordinary issues such as health, money, work or family. This fear or anxiety is present most days for at least six months and negatively affects their work, school or personal relationships.

The symptoms of GAD may include:

- Feeling restless, wound up or on edge
- Being easily fatigued
- Having difficulty concentrating
- Being irritable
- Having muscle tension
- Difficulty controlling feelings of worry
- Having sleep problems, such as trouble falling or staying asleep, restlessness or unsatisfying sleep

GAD develops slowly, often starting during our teen years or early adulthood. Anxiety may run in families and may be related to our genes, exposure to stressful or negative life events in childhood or early adulthood, or our environment.

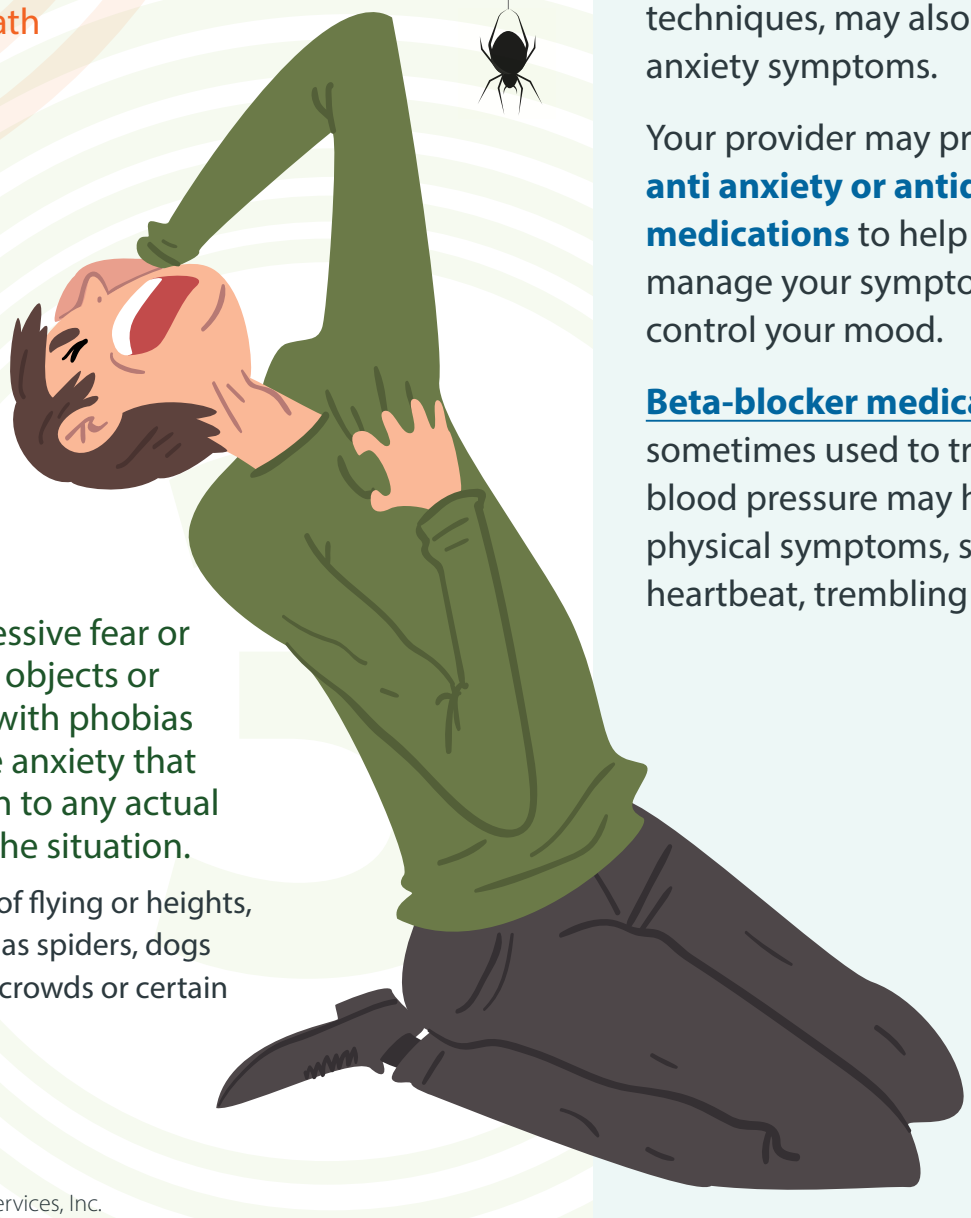
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PANIC DISORDER

People with this condition experience panic attacks, or repeated periods of intense fear when no danger is present. These attacks occur suddenly and may be unexpected or triggered by a feared situation or object.

Symptoms generally last several minutes or more and may include:

- Feelings of impending doom or being out of control
- A rapid heart rate or heart palpitations
- Sweating
- Trembling or shaking
- Shortness of breath



PHOBIAS

A phobia is an excessive fear or aversion to certain objects or situations. People with phobias experience intense anxiety that is out of proportion to any actual danger related to the situation.

They may have a fear of flying or heights, specific animals, such as spiders, dogs or snakes, or being in crowds or certain social situations.

TREATMENT

If you think you might have an anxiety disorder, speak with your health care provider.

Treatment generally involves **psychotherapy, medication, or both.** This often includes "talk therapy" or support group sessions.

Stress management strategies, such as meditation or breathing techniques, may also help relieve anxiety symptoms.

Your provider may prescribe **anti anxiety or antidepressant medications** to help you better manage your symptoms and control your mood.

Beta-blocker medications sometimes used to treat high blood pressure may help relieve physical symptoms, such as rapid heartbeat, trembling or blushing.

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