

What Is Anxiety?

When we're very anxious, we have intense feelings of worry or distress that are not easy to control. Anxiety can interfere with how we go about our everyday lives, and make it hard to cope with 'normal' challenges.

Anxiety is the most common mental health condition in Australia. Up to one-third of women and one-fifth of men will experience anxiety at some point in their lives.

Severe anxiety is a feature of a group of mental health disorders including:

- [generalised anxiety disorder](#)
- social phobia
- specific phobia
- obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- panic disorder
- separation anxiety disorder
- agoraphobia
- post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

It's important to seek help to manage severe anxiety. There are many effective treatments for anxiety, and you can feel better.

Common Signs Of Anxiety

While there are many types of anxiety disorder, there are some common signs and symptoms.

You might be feeling:

- very worried or afraid most of the time
- tense and on edge
- nervous or scared
- panicky
- irritable, agitated
- worried you're going crazy
- detached from your body
- feeling like you may vomit.

You may be thinking:

- 'everything's going to go wrong'
- 'I might die'

- 'I can't handle the way I feel'
- 'I can't focus on anything but my worries'
- 'I don't want to go out today'
- 'I can't calm myself down'.

You may also be experiencing:

- sleep problems (can't get to sleep, wake often)
- pounding heart
- sweating
- 'pins and needles'
- tummy aches, churning stomach
- lightheadedness, dizziness
- twitches, trembling
- problems concentrating
- excessive thirst.

When these constant repetitive thoughts and feelings take over, we can feel overwhelmed, lose sleep, feel exhausted, and start to avoid social situations.

Some of these symptoms can also be signs and symptoms of other medical conditions, so it's always best to see your GP so they can check them properly.

Types Of Anxiety

Anxiety is actually a term for a group of mental health disorders. Each anxiety disorder has its own specific set of symptoms. It is possible to experience more than one type of anxiety at the same time.

It's important for doctors to know which type of anxiety you have, so they can advise you on the most effective treatments.

Common types of anxiety disorders include:

- generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
- social phobia
- specific phobias
- obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)
- panic disorder
- separation anxiety disorder
- agoraphobia.

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is sometimes discussed as a type of anxiety disorder. For more information, go to our [What is post-traumatic stress disorder](#) page.

Other types of anxiety disorders include:

- substance/medication-induced anxiety disorder
- anxiety disorder due to a medical condition
- selective mutism.

Factors for developing anxiety

There is a range of contributing factors for developing anxiety. The factors could be biological – genes (family history), personality traits and brain chemistry – or they can be life events, such as trauma and long-term stress, or a combination of these factors.

Read more about the [causes of anxiety](#).

Also check out these videos on Anxiety and Depression;

[Living With Anxiety](#)

[Do I Have An Anxiety Disorder](#)

[Seasonal Depression](#)

[Positive Affirmations For Anxiety](#)

[Social Media Depression](#)