

# anxiety

Anxiety is a normal feeling that everyone experiences from time to time. Anxiety is an unpleasant or uncomfortable feeling of worry that can be very distressing. Without treatment, anxiety can prevent you from achieving your full potential.

## What this fact sheet includes:

- What is anxiety?
- Types of anxiety disorders
- Symptoms of anxiety in young people
- How to access support
- Important points to remember

## What is anxiety?

Anxiety is when you feel worried or scared for longer than usual. It is normal to feel anxious before a sporting event or speech; this is called mild anxiety and helps us to perform at our best. Anxiety can become a problem if you feel so anxious that it begins to interrupt your day to day life, preventing you from carrying out everyday activities. Different people will feel anxious about different things, sometimes anxiety can make you feel like you are losing control. Some physical feelings of anxiety include, shaking, sweating and 'butterflies in the stomach'. If you or someone you know is experiencing anxiety, it is important to get help from a professional as soon as possible.



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## Anxiety disorders

### • GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER

Increased worry about things such as school, friendships, money and family

### • PANIC DISORDER

Occurrence of a panic attack and intense fear of experiencing another panic attack

### • SOCIAL PHOBIAS

Fearful of any situation where public scrutiny or embarrassment may occur such as being judged negatively by friends or being criticised by others

### • SPECIFIC PHOBIAS

Distressing fear of a particular situation or object such as public speaking, insects or confined spaces. A person experiencing a particular phobia will generally avoid the object or situation

### • OBSESSIVE COMPULSIVE DISORDER (OCD)

Obsessive, reoccurring and intrusive thoughts and compulsive behaviours. Most obsessive thoughts are about cleanliness, contamination, symmetry and safety

### • POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Can occur after a person experiences what they perceive to be a traumatic event. Symptoms include, flash backs, sleeping difficulties and irritability.



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## Signs of anxiety in young people

Anxiety can affect both your mental health and physical health. Symptoms may last for a short period of time (second or minutes) or may persist for longer periods of time (hours or days). Some symptoms include:

- Restlessness, irritability or feeling uncomfortable
  - Constant worrying or thinking that something bad is going to happen
  - Feeling that people do not like you
  - Being socially isolated or withdrawing from friends and family
  - Difficulty concentrating, paying attention or being preoccupied
  - Issues with school, uni or work life
  - Asking many questions for constant reassurance
  - Being pessimistic
  - Not volunteering or avoidance of challenging situations
  - Sleeping difficulties
  - Excessive shyness
  - Feeling overly self conscious
- How to access support
- Important points to remember

## How to access support

A person experiencing anxiety needs support and empathy. It's important that support is accessed as soon as possible as there are many ways to decrease anxiety in your life.

- Avoid alcohol and other drugs as they can increase your anxiety
- Maintaining an active lifestyle will improve your general health and wellbeing
- Eat healthily and try new ways to relax, such as reading and listening to music
- Speak with a trusted family member or friend, it's important to talk about your anxiety so people can support you
- Make an appointment with a general practitioner (doctor) or psychologist who will be able to provide professional advice.

## Important points to remember

Anxiety in young people is commonly linked with depression. It is important that you or someone you know accesses help as soon as possible. Anxiety can be managed with professional treatment and there are many things you can do in your every day life to help ease any symptoms.

If you are supporting someone with anxiety, be calm and patient. Never tell someone to 'calm down' or 'relax' as this can increase their distress. Listen and provide them with a level of support that feels comfortable. Remember to look after yourself and seek assistance if required. If you or someone you know is experiencing a mental health emergency call the Mental Health Emergency Response Line (MHERL) on 1300 555 788 (all hours) 1800 676 822 (rural free call).