



the stats and facts about anxiety

We all feel anxious from time to time—it might be about exam results, a new job or about the outcome of an important sports match. Such anxiety is a normal part of life. However, for some people, the feelings of anxiety can be much more extreme and become what's known as an anxiety disorder.

HOW CAN I TELL THE DIFFERENCE?

The normal, healthy type of anxiety is usually brought on by a problem in your life right now (such as a test or a job interview). It usually only lasts a few hours or a couple of days at most and it doesn't affect your health or get in the way of other parts of your life. In some ways, a certain amount of anxiety is good for us, as it helps us perform at our best.

Too much anxiety, however, can be totally overwhelming and get in the way of other things such as how well we do at school or work and how we get on with our friends and family. If your anxiety is affecting your life in a negative way, you may have an anxiety disorder. A person experiencing an anxiety disorder will find that their feelings of anxiety:

- are more intense and last longer (weeks, months or more)
- negatively affect their thoughts, how they act and their general health (see below)
- cause them distress and get in the way of their day-to-day enjoyment of life.

People with anxiety disorders often become worried or upset about their problem.

The table below shows some of the symptoms of an anxiety disorder:

Behaviours

Avoiding going out
Finding ways to lessen feelings of anxiety, such as always having someone with you or carrying a phone at all times
Avoiding eye contact
Using alcohol or drugs to calm yourself down

Thoughts

"I'm going crazy"
"I won't have anything interesting to say"
"I can't control my worry"
"I have a serious illness that the doctors can't detect"
"What if germs get on my hands and I get sick?"

Feelings

Confused
Anxious
Tense all the time
Constantly nervous
Panicky
Terrified
On edge
Scared

Physical

Blushing
Trembling
Heart racing
Numbness, tingling
Nausea
Sweating
Shaking
Shortness of breath
Dizziness

People with anxiety disorders often become worried or upset about their problem. This may lead to them developing depression as well.

HOW COMMON ARE ANXIETY DISORDERS?

Anxiety disorders are fairly common. Often people develop anxiety in their teens and around one in 25 people aged between 13 and 17 will experience anxiety in any given 12 month period. For those between 18 and 25 years, the number is higher at around one in 10.

It is important to recognise and treat anxiety problems as early as possible, as this can prevent a lifetime of experiencing both anxiety and depression.

HOW DO I MANAGE ANXIETY?

- Speak to your GP about how you're feeling and look into seeing a counsellor or psychologist.
- Try cognitive behavioural therapy to work out and change the way you react to things.
- It may be useful to learn some relaxation techniques.
- If you've got depression as well, your doctor may suggest medication as well as talking therapies.

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WHAT IS A PANIC DISORDER?

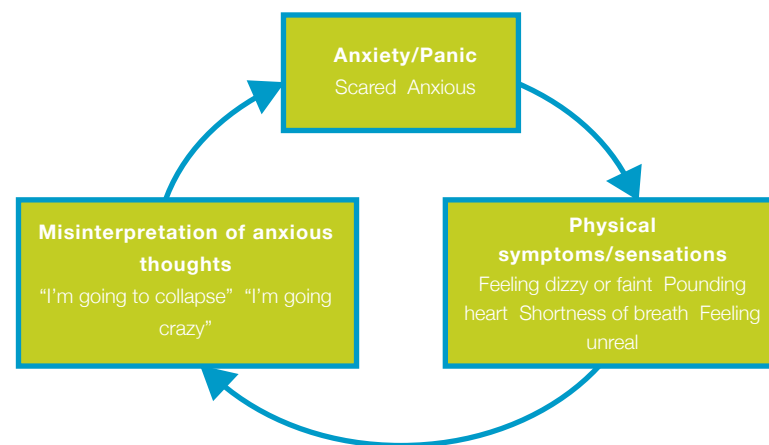
A panic disorder occurs when a person has reoccurring panic attacks. A panic attack is defined as the quick onset of extreme feelings of fear or anxiety. During a panic attack, a person may feel like they've lost control of their body and emotions, and will often feel very sick, dizzy and short of breath. Even without a panic disorder, one in five people will experience a panic attack at some point in their life.

If a person is experiencing depression, they also may experience one or more panic attacks. If the attack isn't dealt with properly and the person incorrectly takes it as a sign that they're going crazy, then they could get more anxious and are more likely to have other panic attacks in the future.

Panic attacks can be managed and beaten, and it's important to think of them in this way, otherwise you can get into a cycle of panic as shown below.



THE CYCLE OF PANIC



LEARN OTHER STRATEGIES TO MANAGE ANXIETY

- Ybblue factsheet: Dealing with stress
- Ybblue factsheet: Getting things sorted

SOURCE

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The OzHelp Foundation

1300 OZHELP (1300 694 357)
www.ozhelp.org.au

BeyondBlue

For information about depression, anxiety and related drug and alcohol problems visit www.beyondblue.org.au or call the *beyondblue: the national depression initiative* info line on 1300 22 4636

