

Anxiety

Know when it's an emotion, and when it's an issue

Chances are, you've experienced anxiety at some point in your life. This feeling of worry or nervousness can strike when we're faced with a major challenge. But for some, anxiety is actually a nervous disorder, one that includes compulsive behavior and feelings of panic.

Symptoms of anxiety

- Feeling nervous, restless or tense
- Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom
- Increased heart rate
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Feeling weak or tired
- Trouble concentrating or thinking about anything other than the present worry
- Trouble sleeping
- Digestive problems
- Difficulty controlling worry
- Having the urge to avoid things that trigger anxiety

When is anxiety an issue?

Anxiety is a cause for greater concern when it:

- Interferes with your daily activities
- Is out of proportion based on the situation
- Lasts a long time

People with anxiety disorders often have intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Sudden feelings of intense anxiety and terror can reach a peak within minutes, resulting in panic attacks.

When to see a doctor

Talk to your doctor if you experience any of the following:

- You're concerned that you're worrying so much that it's interfering with work, your relationships or other parts of your life.
- Your fear, worry or anxiety is difficult to control.
- Along with anxiety, you feel depressed, have trouble with alcohol or drug use, or have other mental health concerns.
- You think your anxiety could be linked to a physical health problem.

Panic attacks and panic disorder — when to call a doctor

When faced with a situation that is threatening or dangerous, it is normal to experience anxiety. But when a sense of panic comes out of the blue for no apparent reason, it could be a sign of panic disorder.

Call your doctor right away if:

- Attacks of intense fear or anxiety seem to come on without a reason.
- You have a panic attack or worry that you will have another one, and that your worrying will interfere with your ability to do your daily activities.
- You have occasional physical symptoms (such as shortness of breath and chest pain) — but you're not sure what is causing them.



Seek emergency treatment immediately if you have suicidal thoughts or behaviors

Remember, your worries might not simply go away on their own. They are a real issue, and they may even get worse over time if you don't get help. So if you're experiencing anxiety, see your doctor or a mental health provider for the help you need to get relief.

Sources:

WebMD: Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder – When To Call a Doctor (accessed January 2016): webmd.com/anxiety-panic/tc/panic-attacks-and-panic-disorder-when-to-call-a-doctor.
 Mayo Clinic website: Anxiety (accessed January 2016): mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/anxiety/symptoms-causes/dxc-20168124.