Anxiety

Worry and nervousness can be a natural part of life from time to time. All of us worry at some point about things like health, money, or family problems. Recent studies show that up to 40% of the population experiences anxiety and 1 in 5 Americans have a diagnosed anxiety disorder.

While occasional worry and transient anxiety can actually be productive (studying for exams, attention to detail for certain actions such as driving a car), persistent and overwhelming anxiety can interfere with daily life and work responsibilities.

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Common types of anxiety

If you or someone you know is experiencing symptoms of anxiety it is important to consult a clinician who can assess for the presence of an anxiety disorder and provide or refer you for treatment. The most commonly occurring anxiety disorders include the following:

• Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)
• Panic Disorder
• Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder
• Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
• Social Anxiety Disorders
• Phobias

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While you should keep an eye out for symptoms in yourself, it's particularly important to pay attention to signs in others so you can help them seek treatment and feel better. The support of a loved one can have a huge impact on someone seeking the help they need.

Signs of anxiety include:

- Feeling nervous, tense or restless
- Persistent worrying
- Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom
- Chronic or severe fatigue
- Trouble concentrating
- Trouble sleeping
- Increased heart rate
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation)
- Sweating
- Trembling
- Gastrointestinal (GI) problems

Signs of anxiety in others:

- Frequent headaches, including migraines
- Gastrointestinal problems
- Unexplained aches and pains
- Excessive fatigue
- Complaints of not feeling well with no obvious medical cause
- Changes in eating habits

Treatment can help

How is anxiety treated? First, talk to your clinician/doctor about your symptoms. Your doctor should do an exam to make sure that another physical problem isn't causing the symptoms. The doctor may refer you to a mental health specialist. Anxiety disorders are generally treated psychotherapy, medication, or both.

Psychotherapy

A type of psychotherapy called cognitive behavior therapy (CBT) is especially useful for treating anxiety. CBT is typically provided in 12-20 sessions and teaches different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to situations that help him or her feel less anxious and worried. Improved coping skills are one major outcome of CBT.

Medication

Doctors also may prescribe medication to help treat anxiety. Any decision regarding the use of medication should be made with your doctor. Talk with your doctor about the best treatment for you.

RESOURCES

Anxiety and Depression Association of America: adaa.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, available 24 hours everyday: 1-800-273-8255

National Alliance on Mental Illness: www.nami.org/Learn-More/Mental-Health-Conditions/Anxiety-Disorders

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