

WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Anxiety is more than just feeling stressed or worried about any one particular thing. While stress or worry are common responses to a situation or an issue, these usually pass when the stressful issue has been resolved or a period of time has passed.

Anxiety is when these feelings don't subside in a reasonable way. It's an ongoing set of feelings which at times can have no obvious cause. It's a serious condition that can make it very difficult to cope with everyday life.

While stress or worry are things we all must deal with from time to time, anxiety is something that can feel very difficult to control and manage.

What are the signs and symptoms?

The symptoms of anxiety are sometimes not all that obvious as they often develop gradually, and can be hard to identify as they set in. This is especially so when you consider that many of the symptoms overlap with daily stress or worry; it can be hard to differentiate between isolated stressors and long-term anxiety or to know how much is too much.

Some common emotional symptoms include:

- Excessive worry about past events that can't be changed or about future events that are beyond your control.
- Feelings of apprehension.
- A sense of powerlessness.
- Fear of impending panic, dread or doom.
- Your mind is racing, you have difficulty thinking clearly.
- It's hard to concentrate or you have difficulty remembering things; you're "scatterbrained".

Some common physical symptoms include:

- Increased heart rate or rapid breathing (hyperventilation), or a shortness of breath.
- Excessive sweating, or feeling like you're overheating.
- Trembling or shakes.
- Feeling tired, lethargic or weak.
- Muscle tension and headaches.
- Difficulty sleeping, light sleeping or frequently having nightmares.
- Hot and cold flushes.
- A dry mouth.
- Chest pain.

If some of these symptoms are affecting your enjoyment of life or your performance at work they could lead on to more significant issues and eventually lead to depression.

Talk to a doctor, counsellor or mental health professional about your anxiety symptoms. They will be able to help you with strategies, treatments and plans to manage your symptoms and ensure anxiety doesn't affect your overall health and wellbeing.

