

Anxiety Self-Test

How do you know how much anxiety is too much? If you suspect that you might suffer from generalized anxiety disorder, complete the following self-test and show the results to your health care professional.

Are you troubled by any of the following:

- Yes** **No** Excessive worry, occurring more days than not, for at least six months?
- Yes** **No** Unreasonable worry about a number of events or activities, such as work, school and/or health?
- Yes** **No** The inability to control the worry?

Are you bothered by at least three of the following?

- Yes** **No** Restlessness, feeling keyed-up or being on edge?
- Yes** **No** Being easily tired?
- Yes** **No** Having problems concentrating?
- Yes** **No** Irritability?
- Yes** **No** Muscle tension?
- Yes** **No** Trouble falling asleep or staying asleep, or restless and unsatisfying sleep?
- Yes** **No** Does your anxiety interfere with your daily life?

Having more than one illness at the same time can make it difficult to diagnose and treat the different conditions. Illnesses that sometimes complicate anxiety disorders include depression and substance abuse. With this in mind, please take a minute to answer the following questions.

Have you experienced changes in sleeping or eating habits?

- Yes** **No**

More days than not, do you feel:

- Yes** **No** Sad or depressed?
- Yes** **No** Disinterested in life?
- Yes** **No** Worthless or guilty?

During the last year, has the use of alcohol or drugs:

- Yes** **No** Resulted in your failure to fulfill responsibilities with work, school, or family?
- Yes** **No** Placed you in a dangerous situation, such as driving a car under the influence?
- Yes** **No** Gotten you arrested?
- Yes** **No** Continued despite causing problems for you and/or your loved ones?

Reference: Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fourth Edition. Washington, DC, American Psychiatric Association, 1994.

Take Charge of Your Health

If you are struggling with anxiety or other mood disorders, ask your healthcare provider about all of your treatment options. This could be your first step toward a happier and healthier tomorrow.



REFERENCES

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2. Santos, P., et al. "Elevated T-maze evaluation of anxiety and memory effects of NMDA/glycine-B site ligands injected into the dorsal periaqueductal gray matter and the superior colliculus of rats." Neuropharmacology 51.2 (2006): 203-12.



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Anxiety & Panic Disorder

What is the connection between anxiety/panic disorder and your nervous system?



Recognizing Anxiety Disorders

Some anxiety and fear is normal. It's part of life. But for many people, normal fears can escalate into persistent, irrational fears that interfere with daily life. For them, constant anxiety and fear become an unbearable burden.

Like diabetes or heart disease, anxiety disorders are serious medical conditions that can get progressively worse if left untreated. Fortunately, anxiety disorders are very treatable. The remedy depends on the type of disorder. Most disorders fall into one of five categories:

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

- Excessive, unrealistic worry that lasts six months or more

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (OCD)

- Persistent, recurring thoughts or obsessions that reflect exaggerated anxiety or fears

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

- Exposure to a traumatic event

Panic Disorders

- Severe attacks of panic for no apparent reason.

Phobias

- Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD): Extreme anxiety about being judged by others or
- Intense fear reaction to a specific object or situation (such as spiders, dogs, or heights)

Facts about Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive worry about everyday things. Unlike those who are anxious from time to time, individuals with anxiety disorders are plagued by excessive worrying over a prolonged period of time – generally at least 6 months.

- Anxiety disorders are the most common psychiatric illnesses affecting both children and adults.*
- 19 million adult Americans suffer from anxiety disorders.*
- Anxiety disorders may develop from a complex set of risk factors — including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events.*
- Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only about one-third of people suffering from an anxiety disorder receive treatment.*
- Anxiety disorders are commonly misdiagnosed and under-treated.*
- Anxiety disorders can mimic physical illnesses — causing fatigue, restlessness, sleep problems, insomnia, muscle tension, sweating, nausea, cold hands, difficulty swallowing, jumpiness, gastrointestinal discomfort or diarrhea.*

Anxiety disorders are characterized by excessive worry about everyday things.

* Data adapted from the National Institute of Mental Health.

Anxiety Disorders & Neurotransmitter Levels

Anxiety disorders

are among the most common neurotransmitter-related conditions. Others include depression, compulsive behaviors, insomnia, and migraines



Neurotransmitters

are chemicals that relay signals between nerve cells, called "neurons." They are present throughout the body and are required for proper brain function. Serious health problems including anxiety and panic disorders can occur if certain neurotransmitter levels are too high or too low.

Every neurotransmitter behaves differently. Some are inhibitory, meaning they tend to calm the brain. Others are excitatory and have the opposite effect. Extensive scientific research has revealed a close link between imbalances in gamma-amino-butyric acid (GABA, the central nervous system's primary inhibitory neurotransmitter) and anxiety disorders¹⁻². Elevations in a number of excitatory neurotransmitters, including epinephrine, norepinephrine, PEA, glutamate, and histamine may also be associated with anxiety disorders.

Environmental and biological factors —including stress, poor diet, neurotoxins or genetics — can cause imbalances in the levels of neurotransmitter chemicals in the brain. These imbalances can trigger or exacerbate anxiety disorder symptoms.

Improving Treatment

Most of the drug-based methods used to treat anxiety include chemicals that either imitate a neurotransmitter or redistribute existing neurotransmitters. Many affect serotonin, and some affect other neurotransmitters like GABA, norepinephrine, or dopamine. It is generally believed that drugs supporting serotonin signaling will be beneficial when anxiety results from a lack of serotonin and that GABA supporting drugs will be effective when a person's symptoms are caused by a lack of GABA. While the idea of matching a drug to a chemical imbalance is generally supported, the vast majority of healthcare providers prescribe psychological drugs based only on a patient's symptoms and very few actually try and match a drug to a biochemical imbalance. This may explain why some drugs are ineffective for some patients.

Neurotransmitter function can also be supported with nutrient-based programs. Neurotransmitters are made from various components of food in a normal, healthy diet. Increasing the amounts of these dietary constituents can help maintain normal neurotransmitter levels.

While no program can guarantee success for everyone, it is worthwhile to effectively match a drug-based and/or nutrient-based program to the specific needs of the individual.