

# THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ANXIETY

In the Clinic  
Annals of Internal Medicine

## What is anxiety?

- Everyone feels worried or fearful sometimes.
- But in some people, these feelings become overwhelming, persistent, or interfere with daily life.
- Anxiety disorders include panic disorder, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and posttraumatic stress disorder.

## What are the signs and symptoms?

- Extreme nervousness or worry.
- Feeling intensely panicked.
- Feeling a sense of doom or powerlessness.
- Rapid breathing (hyperventilating) and an increased heart rate.
- Sweating.
- Trembling or feeling weak or tired.
- Irresistible urges to perform purposeless acts or rituals.
- Reexperiencing the feelings of traumatic events.

## How is it diagnosed?

- Your doctor will ask questions about your symptoms and conduct a careful examination.
- Laboratory tests or other tests may help identify whether your anxiety has a medical cause.



- Underlying causes for anxiety include heart disease, diabetes, thyroid problems, asthma, and drug abuse or alcohol withdrawal.

## How is it treated?

- Psychotherapy (also known as cognitive behavioral therapy or psychological counseling).
- Lifestyle changes, such as avoiding alcohol and coffee and quitting smoking.
- Relaxation techniques, such as meditation or regular exercise.
- Medication, such as an antidepressant or anti-anxiety medication.

## For More Information

[www.adaa.org/](http://www.adaa.org/)  
Education, support, and other resources on anxiety disorders from the Anxiety and Depression Association of America.

[www.apa.org/helpcenter/anxiety-treatment.aspx](http://www.apa.org/helpcenter/anxiety-treatment.aspx)  
[www.apa.org/centrodeapoyo/tratamiento.aspx](http://www.apa.org/centrodeapoyo/tratamiento.aspx)  
Answers to frequently asked questions about anxiety disorders from the American Psychological Association, in English and Spanish.

[www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/mental-health-medications/complete-index.shtml](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/mental-health-medications/complete-index.shtml)  
Information on mental health medications and on psychotherapy options, from the National Institute of Mental Health.

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