

ANXIETY



- ⊗ **Have you visited a doctor** more than twice in 6 months because of chest pains, only to be told upon examination that there is no physical problem?
- ⊗ **Do you fear leaving home** without being accompanied by someone you know well?
- ⊗ **Are you tense and unable to relax** most of the time?
- ⊗ Do you spend **excessive time worrying** about bad things that might happen in the future?
- ⊗ **Do you drink or take tranquilizers** in order to cope with social occasions?
- ⊗ **Have everyday tasks** such as washing your hands or locking the front door **turned into obsessive rituals** you are unable to stop repeating?

If you answered “yes” to any of these questions, you, like many other people, may have significant problem with **anxiety**.

What is commonly referred to as anxiety is the **emotional tension** that functions as a signal of *potential danger*. When the danger is exaggerated or based more on internal fears than external fact, and anxiety *interferes with daily functioning*, it becomes an **anxiety disorder**.

Anxiety disorders include.....

- ✓ **Obsessive-Compulsive Behavior:** *consuming fears* of hurting other; *excessive concerns* about dirt or contamination; ritualization of *events* such as handwashing or locking the door; doubt and worry about things not being in exactly the right order.

- ✓ **Panic Attacks:** unexpected, intense anxiety states that are characterized by thoughts of impending doom coupled with physiological symptoms such as a racing heart and difficulty breathing. Sweating, dizziness, nausea, numbness, and feelings of unreality are also common in panic attacks. Victims fear they're going to **die, go crazy, or lose control**.
- ✓ **Phobias:** excessive, disabling fears of specific objects or situations. Phobias can stem from *specific experiences*, such as a childhood dogbite; social learning, which teaches a child to fear what a parent is afraid of; or *anxiety attacks*, in which panicky feelings are triggered whenever the person is in a place or situation where high anxiety has occurred previously.

Anxiety is hard on your body. At least half of the people with anxiety disorders have seen a physician within the past six months for physical symptoms of anxiety. Sufferers consult **neurologists** for dizziness, **cardiologists** for chest pains and irregular heartbeats, **gastroenterologists** for digestive disorders and **respiratory specialists** for shortness of breath.

Although many victims of anxiety disorders seek help for their symptoms, **only a small portion ever receive appropriate treatment**. Those who do not remain at risk for *alcohol and substance abuse, depression, suicide and sexual disorders*. Heart disease, high blood pressure and other circulatory problems also occur more often in people with high anxiety.

Women are more than twice as likely than men to have an anxiety disorder. Women tend to be more anxious about *authority figures* and encounters with strangers, while men are more anxious in *“body exposure”* situations (such as locker rooms) or asking for a date.

HelpPeopleSM
Employee Assistance Program

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