

# ANXIETY



## What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a natural reaction that everyone experiences. It is a normal response to a stressful event or perceived threat and can range from feeling uneasy and worried to severe panic. Anxiety disorders are the most common disorders in Australia and one in four people will experience some form of anxiety at some stage in their lives ([www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)). There are many types of anxiety disorders and people will often have symptoms of more than one. Common anxiety disorders are:

- **Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD):** People who have GAD feel anxious on most days over a period of at least six months. They excessively worry about what are often real issues such as finances, illness or family problems that often impact their everyday lives.
- **Panic disorder:** A panic attack is distinct feeling of high anxiety that appears difficult to control. It is often accompanied by a feeling of excessive fear. Some of the physical symptoms include shortness of breath; palpitations; chest-pain; feelings of losing control.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD):** PTSD may occur after a person has experienced, witnessed or had an association with an extremely traumatic event. People with PTSD will often have uncontrollable fear or flashbacks associated with the trauma and this can significantly impact their daily life.
- **Adjustment disorder:** Adjustment disorder is a short-term condition that occurs when a person is unable to cope with or adjust to a particular source of stress, such as a major life change, loss, or event. It is often triggered by an outside stress and generally subsides once the person has adapted to the situation.



## Signs and symptoms of anxiety include but are not limited to:

- Increased heart-rate
- Sweating
- Feeling apprehensive and tense
- Increased irritability and sensitivity to criticism
- Inability to finish work projects
- Difficulty concentrating or making decisions
- Being unable to sleep
- Increased use of alcohol and drugs
- Excessive worry about common problems
- Panic attacks
- Feeling overwhelmed and unable to cope
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Suicidal thoughts

## What causes anxiety disorder?

Anxiety can manifest itself as a result of a number of factors that can include:

- **Environmental factors:** Life experiences such as a change in our family environment, relationships or work related changes.
- **Biological factors:** An imbalance of the chemicals in the brain that regulate feelings and physical reactions can affect our thoughts, emotions and behaviours.
- **Genetic factors:** Having a family history of anxiety increases the risk.
- **Personality:** Personality types who are highly sensitive, emotional or who are perfectionists may be more prone to developing an anxiety disorder.

If you (or someone you know) are exhibiting signs of anxiety, you should seek help. Consider talking to your doctor or contact an organisation that can provide advice and support: [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au) & [www.mhfa.com.au](http://www.mhfa.com.au). If changes need to be made in the workplace to support you, talk to your supervisor or to your **HR Adviser**. The University's Employee Assistance Program (<http://www.deakin.edu.au/hr/ohs/assistance.php>) may also assist.