

Coping with anxiety

What is anxiety?

Moving, starting a new job or even a doctor's visit are all things we can relate to that can make us feel anxious and we have all experienced anxiety from time to time.

Anxiety is a feeling of nervousness or unease because of worries or fears you have about a situation or problem. For example, you may worry about looking foolish in a social situation or not being successful at your job.

Anxiety is often a short-term problem and goes away on its own. However, people who experience persistent and overwhelming anxiety can feel it is ruling their lives and try to avoid situations that cause them anxiety.

Signs of anxiety:

Anxiety can cause many physical and psychological symptoms such as:

- Muscular tension
- Nausea
- Rapid-breathing
- Insomnia
- Irritability
- Being on edge
- Inability to relax
- Fear

How you can cope

Whether it's dealing with a short-term stressful situation, or you regularly experience feelings of anxiety, there are many things you can do to cope that will help you feel better and more in control.

Talk to a friend or family member. Often just by talking about what's making you anxious can relieve your feelings and get things in perspective. They may also be able to offer specific advice about the situation.

Relax. Making time for yourself mentally and physically, whether it's by listening to music or reading, is important for recharging your mind and keeping you healthy.

Positive thinking. Remember your good points, and don't be too hard on yourself. No-one is perfect.

See your GP. If you feel persistent anxiety speak to your GP who may be able to refer you to a counsellor or support group or discuss medication options.

Write it down. Make a list of what's bothering you, or situations where you are likely to become anxious. Think about how you might be able to respond differently and feel more in control of the situation and then practice it the next time the situation arises.

Counselling. This can help you understand the source of your anxiety and develop strategies for coping. It often has long-term benefits when compared to other treatments. You can ask your GP or practice nurse.

Eat a healthy diet. Avoid stimulants such as coffee, cigarettes and alcohol that can produce anxiety. Eating a healthy diet and avoiding stimulants can help also help you sleep better.

Get plenty of exercise. Exercise releases tension and uses up adrenalin that cause anxiety, which will improve your mood and make you feel more positive.

For more help

Mind - Call on 0845 766 01630, or visit www.mind.org.uk

NHS Direct - Check your NHS Direct self-help guide at the back of your Thomson Local directory or visit www.nhsdirect.uk

Samaritans is available 24 hours a day to provide confidential emotional support. Call on 08457 90 90 90 or go to www.samaritans.org