

# An Anxious Mind or An Anxiety Disorder

## How to tell the difference?

Feeling anxious about an upcoming assignment or sporting event, or when making an important decision, is a normal part of life. However, having an anxiety disorder is a whole different matter altogether.

### Anxiety Disorders

[Anxiety disorders](#) belong to a category of mental illnesses that are characterized by excessive fear or anxiety that is difficult to control and negatively and substantially impacts daily functioning (SAMSHA, 2015). For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time (NIMH, 2015). This group of disorders includes, but is not limited to, panic disorder, separation anxiety disorder, social phobia, and generalized anxiety disorder (SAMSHA, 2015).

### Facts about Anxiety Disorders

- Anxiety disorders typically develop in childhood and persist to adulthood (SAMSHA, 2015).
- Specific anxiety disorders include generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder, separation anxiety disorder, and social anxiety disorder (SAMSHA, 2015).
- National prevalence data indicate that nearly 40 million people in the United States (18%) experience an anxiety disorder in any given year (SAMSHA, 2015).
- According to SAMHSA's report, [Behavioral Health, United States – 2012](#), lifetime phobias and generalized anxiety disorders are the most prevalent among adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18 and have the earliest median age of first onset, around age 6 (SAMSHA, 2015).
- Evidence suggests that many anxiety disorders may be caused by a combination of genetics, biology, and environmental factors (SAMSHA, 2015).
- Adverse childhood experiences may also contribute to risk for developing anxiety disorders (SAMSHA, 2015).

### Treatment

Anxiety disorders are treatable, so if you believe that you or your child has an anxiety disorder, contact your physician, psychiatrist, counselor, psychologist, or social worker.

#### *Common forms of Treatment*

- Medication
  - Medication does not necessarily cure anxiety disorders, but it often reduces the symptoms. Medication typically must be prescribed by a doctor (NIMH, 2015).
- Psychotherapy
  - Psychotherapy (sometimes called “talk therapy”) involves talking with a trained clinician, such as a psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or counselor, to understand what caused an anxiety disorder and how to deal with it (NIMH, 2015).
- The combination of medication and psychotherapy often proves to be the most effective combination.

### Additional Information

For additional information visit:

[https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml - part\\_145337](https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml - part_145337)  
<http://www.samhsa.gov/treatment/mental-disorders - anxiety>