



# Anxiety and Panic

INFORMATION SHEET



Award Winning Therapies

## What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is an umbrella term that covers a number of conditions. These conditions are generally diagnosed by a General Practitioner or a Psychiatrist/Psychologist.

Anxiety is a normal emotion that helps to motivate humans to perform under pressure. However, too much anxiety, or anxiety that continues for too long can be damaging to mental and physical health and is accompanied by a wide variety of symptoms that for most people can be quite unpleasant.

## What are the symptoms of anxiety?

As with most things in life, the symptoms of any condition, including anxiety, can be very different on an individual basis. No two people are the same, however the most common symptoms of anxiety can be broken down into mental and physical symptoms:

### Mental symptoms:

- Panic
- Fear
- Phobias
- Uneasiness
- Racing thoughts
- Uncontrollable overthinking and over analysis
- Hypervigilance (an over-awareness and being hypersensitive to your surroundings)
- Irritability
- A sense of impending doom
- Dissociation
- An urge to escape from a situation or surroundings
- Impaired concentration
- Insomnia
- Low mood and despair

### Physical symptoms:

- Shortness of breath
- Heart palpitations
- Cold skin, or a feeling of cold
- A sensation of heat, perhaps prickling and/or blushing
- Tingling, or pins and needles
- Numbness
- Restlessness
- Dry mouth

- Nausea and stomach aches
- Sweatiness, especially the palms of the hands and feet
- Shaking and trembling
- Dizziness
- Feeling faint, or actually fainting
- In chronic (ongoing) anxiety, there may also be hair loss and depression.

## Why do we get anxiety?

The full causes are unknown but there are some factors in anxiety that are understood, and these include:

- Genetics – some people are more prone to developing anxiety if it runs in their family. It may be passed through your genes
- Life experiences – life experiences programme the mind to react in certain ways to stressful situations or other “triggers”. The resulting behaviour may be an attempt by your natural survival mechanism and instincts to keep you safe (even if it doesn’t appear to be working)
- Chemical induced anxiety – this can be caused by everyday substances such as caffeine or alcohol. Prescription medication may also induce anxiety as a side effect, and this should be discussed with your GP or specialist. Pharmacy (over the counter) and shop bought medication may also have side effects. Illegal drugs often cause anxiety.
- Foodstuffs – people with food intolerances may feel anxious after eating or drinking certain foods and drinks. People with Irritable Bowel Syndrome commonly report this.
- Transient (temporary) life problems and circumstances – it is not uncommon for anxiety to pass once a problem in life has been resolved. Most people are aware of the cause of this type of anxiety.

Anxiety is often an overactive protective mechanism that whilst natural is not performing the function that it is meant to, meaning that the symptoms of anxiety persist long after their useful purpose has been served, or that the level of anxiety is not appropriate for the situation(s) being faced. Small problems can often lead to severe nervousness in people with an anxiety disorder. It is worth remembering that this is your brain’s way of trying it’s best to protect you, even though it is overreacting to the seriousness of the perceived threat or problem. A pattern of behaviour has been learned, and until it is changed for a new, more desirable pattern, will likely continue. Fortunately, patterns can be changed, safely and effectively, in a majority of people suffering with anxiety.

## What therapies exist for the symptoms of anxiety disorder?

As with the symptoms of anxiety, therapies depend on the individual, and there is no one therapy that works for everyone. We offer a variety of therapies to combat the symptoms of anxiety, and you may require more than one therapy type in a short treatment programme tailored to you. Commonly used therapies for anxiety include:

- Hypnotherapy
- Psychotherapy
- Eye-Movement Desensitisation and Reprocessing (EMDR)
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)
- Talk therapies – such as counselling
- Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP)
- Mindfulness

Some people prefer hands on therapies as part of their anxiety management approach, and these may include:

- Massage, such as Indian Head Massage, back, neck and shoulder massages, and other modalities of massage
- Reflexology
- Acupuncture
- Aromatherapy using essential oils

## What is a desirable outcome?

Again, this depends on the individual. A good therapy plan always takes into account the client's desired outcome, and discusses the realistic expectations from therapy. Most commonly therapy is used to repattern the responses to anxiety in order to desensitise the individual to the identified triggers that cause the symptoms of anxiety. This approach allows the individual to face the triggers (internal or external) without the same pattern of symptoms being experienced.

An ideal situation is a complete removal of the symptoms associated with anxiety. In some cases, depending on the individual, the symptoms may be reduced and not eliminated, and a good level of symptomatic reduction is desirable for some people, without the absolute removal of all symptoms. A small amount of anxiety is required by some people in order to function safely, and this is perfectly normal.

## What next? How do I get an appointment?

Our clinic offers a free initial consultation for people with anxiety. You may wish to bring a friend, relative, or carer too. This consultation is an informal, confidential discussion of how anxiety affects you, and how we can work together to improve your symptoms and quality of life. Contact details are available on the next page.

## Contact the Clinical Wellness Centre

We can be contacted in the following ways:

Telephone:

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