

# ANXIETY

Anxiety is very common. We all experience it some point during our life time. We tend to experience it when faced with situations that we find threatening or difficult. Sometimes we use the term 'stress', but this is not the same as anxiety. Like stress, anxiety may affect somebody both mentally and physically and carry a range of symptoms, but anxiety may be caused by an ongoing worry or, as a sudden response to something that may make us feel scared or threatened. The key differential element is 'fear'.

Under normal circumstances, both fear and anxiety can be helpful. It gets the adrenalin going to help us to avoid dangerous situations, making us alert and giving us the motivation to deal with problems. However, if the feelings become too strong or go for too long, they can stop us from doing the things we want to and can make our lives difficult.

The studies suggest that about one in every ten people will experience some form of anxiety at some point in their lives.

## Symptoms of Anxiety

The symptoms of what's known as the General anxiety disorder develop over a period of time. The severity of symptoms can vary from person to person. It has an impact on both physical and mental ability of an individual. Anxiety can cause a change in your behaviour, and the way that you think and feel about things.

### Psychological symptoms of the condition include:

- restlessness,
- sense of dread,
- feeling 'on edge',
- difficulty concentrating,
- irritability,
- impatience,
- being easily distracted.
- Unable to concentrate
- Feeling worried all the time

As well as affecting you psychologically, anxiety can also affect you physically. **The physical symptoms of anxiety** can include:

- dizziness,
- lethargy,
- pins and needles,
- irregular heart beat (palpitations),

- muscular tension and aches,
- dry mouth,
- excessive sweating,
- shortness of breath,
- stomach ache/indigestion
- diarrhoea
- headache
- painful or missed periods, and
- difficulty in falling, or staying, asleep.

A surge of anxiety may cause panic and cause the person to quickly get out of whatever situation they happen to be in. Anxiety and panic are often accompanied by feelings of **depression** – low mood, loss of appetite and seeing the future as bleak and hopeless.

People generally tend to be anxious about a specific event, or situation. For example, you may feel anxious about sitting an examination, doing a presentation. If you are anxious as a result of a **phobia**, or because of **panic disorder**, you will usually be aware of the cause of your anxiety. For example, if you are claustrophobic (a fear of enclosed spaces) you will be aware that being enclosed will trigger your anxiety. However, if you suffer from General Anxiety disorder, you may not always be clear of the triggers of your anxiety. This not knowing what triggers your anxiety can intensify your feelings of anxiousness. If you do not understand the cause of your anxiety, you may start to worry that there will be no solution. Many people with general anxiety disorder struggle to remember the last time they felt calm and relaxed.