



Psykisk helse

ENGELSK

Anxiety

Angst



Fear is a natural and necessary warning sign of danger, preparing the mind and body for a swift response when facing challenge or threat. The heart beats faster and breathing gets shorter, bringing more oxygen to the muscles so you can run faster or fight better in a flight-or-fight situation.

A sharpening of alertness also allows us to detect danger as quickly as possible. We often experience this as a feeling of tension. Anxiety in its natural state allows us to perform at our best during an exam, or heightens our concentration enough to swerve the car just in time to avoid a collision.

Maybe you are one of those people who continually feel the presence of anxiety in your daily life. There might be a constant anxious ache that can be somewhat disagreeable, but does not bother you seriously or compromise your functioning. This type of anxiety is often a warning sign that something is wrong in your life, or that you are under a great deal of pressure. In that case, it may be time to do something about the situation, either on your own, or with the help of others.

Anxiety should be treated if it becomes too intense or prolonged, or if it appears without any real danger at hand. This kind of anxiety can create a feeling of great discomfort or impede your functioning in everyday life.

If you suffer from anxiety to such an extent that it affects your relationships with other people, compromises your performance at work, or significantly reduces your quality of life, then you need treatment for an anxiety disorder. The following are considered anxiety disorders:

Panic consists of repeated and unexpected attacks of intense anxiety and various physical symptoms in the absence of a truly threatening situation. The attacks are frightening. Because of the intensity of the physical symptoms, many people believe they are having a heart attack or stroke. Sensitivity to changes in the body (for example, increase in pulse or rapid breathing) is typical for people who suffer from panic attacks.

Agoraphobia is the fear of being in places where it could be difficult to leave or receive help if one should become anxious. This leads to a fear of being in crowded stores, waiting in line, using public transit, or being in movie theatres or at meetings. Being afraid of situations where you won't receive the help you need for your anxiety, can as well result in a fear of being too far away from the nearest hospital or doctor. You consequently no longer risk walking in the woods, going to the cottage, or driving in the mountains.

Sociophobia is an excessive fear of making a fool of oneself, or being humiliated and critically scrutinized by others. The worst thinkable thing is speaking aloud in meetings or groups. Eating in a cafeteria, restaurant, or going to a party are troublesome activities. The thought of making contact with someone you would really like to know better is overwhelming. It is common to dread and avoid difficult situations.

Generalized anxiety disorder means being anxious about everything and worrying excessively. These worries could be that your child could be run over, your parents could get ill, that your home is broken into, and that you will be unable to make your loan payments. You may lie awake at night. These worries and limitations will eventually wear you down considerably.

Obsessive-Compulsive disorders are characterized by obsessive thoughts and compulsive actions, or rituals. With obsessions, you feel compelled to think about frightening things, such as accidents or dangerous infectious diseases. These thoughts bring about intense anxiety. You are compelled to carry out specific actions like repeatedly checking the oven or washing your hands in order to suppress the anxiety and thoughts. If you do not perform these rituals, the obsessions and anxieties get worse. These compulsions are often time-consuming, such that you become very tired or unable to accomplish the regular things you need to do.

Post-traumatic Stress disorder consists of anxiety and physical symptoms following a traumatic experience. Many people often re-live frightening situations through mental images or thoughts. Problems sleeping and physical pain are common. Accidents, torture, war, rape, incest, or similarly intense and stressful situations can be the underlying cause of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Do you recognize these symptoms?

Do you get unexpected panic attacks and feel physically anxious?

- Do you notice heart palpitations, a rapid pulse, or discomfort in your chest?
- Do you begin to shiver or sweat?
- Do you suddenly feel faint, dizzy, or shaky?
- Is your anxiety so strong that you are afraid of dying or losing control?

Do you avoid taking public transportation, entering crowded stores, or sitting in the middle of a row of seats?

- Are you afraid of having an anxiety attack in situations where it would be difficult to escape easily?
- Are you afraid to have an anxiety attack in situations where it would be difficult to get help? Would such situations include being away from home on your own, in large groups of people, standing in line, or traveling by bus/train/metro?

Do you feel inhibited in social interaction?

- Do you find it difficult to speak with other people?
- Do you avoid eating or drinking with others?
- Are you afraid to speak in a group setting?

Are you bothered by constant anxiety or worries?

- Do you find it difficult to control your anxieties and worries?
- Have other people said that you worry too much?
- Do you feel constant strain and muscle tension?
- Do you become easily tired or have difficulties concentrating?
- Do you often feel restless or have trouble sleeping?
- Has anxiety and worry led to feelings of being troubled or functioning poorly in your daily life?

Help is out there

Maybe you have thought of going to the doctor, but are embarrassed about your anxiety, or believe that the threshold for getting help is very high. For some patients, it can be difficult to accept that anxiety is at the bottom of their physical discomforts. Good help can readily be found for anxiety disorders. Most importantly, you need to break through this resistance and see your family doctor.

Many people tell their doctors about bodily pains or physical discomforts when anxiety is actually the cause of their pain. This makes it more difficult for the doctor to detect the anxiety problem. It is also necessary for the doctor to take blood tests and do a thorough physical examination to rule out any possibility that the complaints might be caused by something other than anxiety.

Treatment

After the doctor has completed such tests, you and your doctor can put together a treatment plan of conversations, exercise, and possibly medication, depending on what is most suitable. If the treatment doesn't have the expected effect, or if the doctor feels that you need a more specialized treatment, he or she may refer you to a specialist. Generally, it is wise to abstain from or reduce your intake of alcohol, coffee, and tobacco.

Information and guidance are essential for learning to control your anxiety. By gaining an understanding of what is happening in your mind and body during these attacks, you might experience them as far less troubling. Knowledge and information about anxiety can also make it easier to start treatment and understand why the treatment is as it is.

Exposure therapy is the best-documented form of treatment for anxiety and compulsive disorders. Through help and guidance by a competent therapist, you will gradually learn to approach anxiety-inducing situations, and experience that the anxiety gradually decreases. This form of treatment will demand a lot of you, but is known to give very good results in return.

Conversational therapy is another common form of treatment for anxiety disorders. Cognitive therapy is a form of conversation therapy where you learn to identify and alter the unwanted thoughts, ideas, and actions that sustain your anxiety discomforts. During the conversations, you will also receive support and advice.

Group therapy is a form of treatment that is growing rapidly. Here you will have an opportunity to see your own situation in relation to others', get insight as to why others do what they do, and see that you are not alone in having such troubles. You may also get to know your own thoughts, feelings, actions, and reaction patterns better. Group therapy can as well function as a motivating factor for other forms of therapy. The effect of group cognitive behavioral therapy is well documented.

Medication can often be very helpful for anxiety and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Medication can be given by itself, or in combination with other forms of treatment.

Choice of treatment method: Together with your doctor/therapist, you will reach an agreement on which form of treatment is best for you.



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IS-1465

Where to seek help

Emergency – call 113
Doctor/Casualty
Support phone: 810 30 030

Useful information

www.psyisk.no
www.psyiskhelse.no
www.mentalhelse.no
www.psykopp.no
www.nyinorge.no
www.nakmi.no

Broshures on mental health



Anxiety
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Depression
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Eating disorders
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Psychosis
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AD/HD
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Legal protection
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Mental health care in Norway
• For adults, IS-1472
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• About young children, IS-1473



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• Children, IS-1301
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• Adults, IS-1303

Brochures can be downloaded at www.psyisk.no
under Information Material.

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languages of Norway, English, Arabic, Farsi, French, Kurdish/Sorani,
Polish, Punjabi, Russian, Lappish, Serbian/Croatian, Somali, Spanish,
Turkish, Urdu, and Vietnamese.



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