



Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. You might feel anxious when faced with a problem at work, before undertaking an important task, or making an important decision. But anxiety disorders involve more than temporary worry or fear. For a person with an anxiety disorder, the anxiety does not go away and can get worse over time. The feelings can interfere with daily activities such as job performance and relationships. There are several different types of anxiety disorders. Panic disorder and social anxiety disorder are two examples of anxiety disorders.

*Panic Disorder:* People with panic disorder have recurrent unexpected panic attacks, which are sudden periods of intense fear that may include palpitations, pounding heart, or accelerated heart rate; sweating; trembling or shaking; sensations of shortness of breath, smothering, or choking; and feeling of impending doom. Panic disorder symptoms include:

- Sudden and repeated attacks of intense fear
- Feelings of being out of control during a panic attack
- Intense worries about when the next attack will happen
- Fear or avoidance of places where panic attacks have occurred in the past
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*Social Anxiety Disorder:* People with social anxiety disorder (sometimes called “social phobia”) have a marked fear of social or performance situations in which they expect to feel embarrassed, judged, rejected, or fearful of offending others. Social anxiety disorder symptoms include:

- Feeling highly anxious about being with other people and having a hard time talking to them
- Feeling very self-conscious in front of other people and worried about feeling humiliated, embarrassed, or rejected, or fearful of offending others
- Being very afraid that other people will judge them
- Worrying for days or weeks before an event where other people will be
- Staying away from places where there are other people
- Having a hard time making friends and keeping friends
- Blushing, sweating, or trembling around other people
- Feeling nauseous or sick to your stomach when other people are around

Evaluation for an anxiety disorder often begins with a visit to a primary care provider. Some physical health conditions, such as an overactive thyroid or low blood sugar, as well as taking certain medications, can imitate or worsen an anxiety disorder. A thorough mental health evaluation is also helpful, because anxiety disorders often co-exist with other related conditions, such as depression or obsessive-compulsive disorder. Contact your AFA EAP for additional information or referral assistance at 800-424-2406.