

Anxiety Disorders: What You Need to Know

Anxiety disorders are illnesses that cause people to feel frightened, distressed and uneasy for no apparent reason. These disorders can dramatically reduce productivity and significantly diminish an individual's quality of life. Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in America; more than 19 million are affected by these debilitating illnesses each year.

What Are the Different Kinds of Anxiety Disorders?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder- Chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday routine life events, lasting at least six months.

Anticipating the worst even though there is little reason to expect it, accompanied by physical symptoms, such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headache, or nausea.

Panic Disorder- Characterized by panic attacks, sudden feelings of terror that strike repeatedly without warning. Symptoms include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, abdominal discomfort, feelings of unreality, and fear of dying.

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder- Repeated, intrusive, unwanted thoughts or rituals that seem impossible to control.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder- Persistent symptoms that occur after experiencing a traumatic event such as accident, rape, assault, child abuse, natural disasters, or other events perceived as life threatening. Nightmares, flashbacks, numbing of emotions, depression, feeling angry, irritable, distracted, and being easily startled are common.

Social Phobia- Extreme, disabling and irrational fear of something that really poses little or no actual danger; the fear leads to avoidance of objects or situations and can cause people to limit their lives.

Treatment: Behavioral therapy uses techniques such as diaphragmatic breathing or gradual exposure to what is causing the anxiety. Cognitive-behavioral therapy teaches patients to understand their thinking patterns and to react differently to situations that cause them anxiety. Medications are available to effectively treat anxiety. It is common for an anxiety disorder to accompany depression, eating disorders or substance abuse.

Women's Health

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Counseling Center

DidYouKnow?

Health Center

What Do These Students Have in Common?

"When I took a part-time job and started living off-campus, **my course work fell apart. I couldn't concentrate or sleep**, and I was always **IRRITABLE and angry**".—*Leah, sophomore year*

"After two years of straight A's, I **couldn't finish assignments** anymore. I **felt exhausted but couldn't sleep**, and **drank A LOT**. I couldn't enjoy life like my friends did anymore". —*John, junior year*

"I've **always been anxious** and never had much confidence. College was harder than I expected, and then my parents divorced, which was traumatic for me. After a while, **all I did was cry, sleep, and feel waves of panic**." —*Marta, freshman year*

These are college students who got DEPRESSED...got treatment...and got better. College offers new experiences and challenges. This can be exciting—it can also be stressful and make you, or someone you know, feel sad. But when "the blues" last for weeks, or interfere with academic or social functioning, it may be clinical depression.

Symptoms of Depression and Mania

Not everyone who is depressed or manic experiences every symptom. Some people experience a few symptoms, some several. Severity of symptoms varies with individuals.

Depression

Persistent sad, anxious, or "empty" mood	Feelings of hopelessness, pessimism
Feelings of guilt, worthlessness, helplessness	Restlessness, irritability
Insomnia, early-morning awakening or oversleeping	Weight loss or overeating and weight gain
Decreased energy, fatigue, sad, "slowed down"	Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
Difficulty concentrating, remember, making decisions	Physical symptoms that continue even with treatment
Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that you once enjoyed, including sex	

Mania

Inappropriate elation	Inappropriate irritability	Disconnected and racing thoughts
Severe insomnia	Grandiose ideas	Increased talking
Poor judgment	Markedly increased energy	Inappropriate social or sexual behavior

National Depression/Bipolar/Anxiety Screening Day

October 11, 2007

Free, Confidential Screenings 9 am to noon and 1 to 3 pm

The Counseling Center, Saint Mary's College, 166 Le Mans Hall (behind the fireplace)

Questions? Call (574) 284-4565 or email us at smcc@saintmarys.edu

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