

# What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is an unpleasant feeling of great fear and worry. Everybody feels worried and anxious from time to time, and this is a normal part of life. If your anxiety makes you unhappy, or stops you from doing the things you want to do, it may be a problem. Anxiety can cause fast heartbeat and breathing as well as problems concentrating.



## WHY AM I ANXIOUS?

It is hard to point to the cause of anxiety. Each person is different and is anxious for different reasons. Life stresses, some medications and diseases, and events in the past can all make you anxious.

## WHAT CAN I DO?

### EXERCISE

Exercise is a great way to reduce anxiety. Aerobic exercises like running, swimming or cycling, are the best. Aim to do at least 30 minutes of exercise five times a week. For anxiety even 20-30 minutes three times a week can help.



### STOP SMOKING

Smoking may relax you while you are smoking but it makes you feel more anxious the rest of the time. Quitting will actually make you feel a lot better, not worse.

### EAT WELL

Eat vegetables and fruit every day and fish and legumes (lentils, chickpeas, beans etc.) at least 2-3 times a week. Cut down on bread, potatoes and sugar as these foods can make your anxiety worse by causing ups and downs in your blood sugar levels.

### CUT OUT CAFFEINE

Coffee, tea and many types of soda have caffeine in them. Caffeine can wake you up, but it can also make you feel nervous and anxious. Even just one cup of coffee a day could be too much. Try seltzer, with a bit of fruit juice, or an herbal tea instead.

### DRINK LESS ALCOHOL

Alcohol can increase your anxiety so it could be helpful to drink less or stop drinking. If you do drink, do not drink more than one drink a day and don't drink every day.



### OMEGA-3 FATTY ACIDS

Omega-3 fatty acids are found in oily fish like salmon and sardines, and walnuts, flax and pumpkin seeds. They help keep the heart healthy and also may be good for depression and anxiety. Try to eat some of

these foods every day. Fish oil supplements are also an option if you find it hard to eat these foods.

## MIND-BODY

### PSYCHOTHERAPY

Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is one of the best therapies for anxiety. With a therapist you will talk about the thoughts that give you anxiety and what happens when you feel anxious. Together you will learn how to think in a more positive way and learn ways to calm yourself if you feel anxious.

### RELAXATION RESPONSE

**Slow breathing:** Deep breaths slow your heart, which is good for anxiety. You can do breathing exercises like abdominal breathing on your own or with the help of a biofeedback machine.

**Yoga:** Yoga helps connect mind and body to give a deep sense of calm. Whatever your age or fitness level, there is a type of yoga for you.

**Mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR):** Is reduction is a type of meditation training that helps people overcome pain and stress. Among other things, it teaches you to be aware of your body by focusing your attention on it.

### ACUPUNCTURE

Acupuncture is a Traditional Chinese treatment using very thin needles in the skin which can be very helpful for anxiety.

### BOTANICALS

These herbal medicines can help with anxiety, but be sure to let your health care professional know if you are taking them.

**Valerian** can help with sleep and may help you feel less anxious and stressed. You can take it in capsules, tablets, or extract for best effect.

**Passionflower** helps some people relax. It can work well in either tea form or as a liquid extract or a capsule.

**Lavender oil:** Some people find the smell of lavender relaxing. You can mix 2-3 drops of lavender oil with 10 drops of good quality vegetable oil and rub this into the back of your neck to help with anxiety.

For more information, scan the QR code below, or visit [nciph.org/anxiety](http://nciph.org/anxiety)



