



Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety disorders are serious medical illnesses that affect approximately 19 million American adults. These disorders fill people's lives with overwhelming anxiety and fear. Unlike the relatively mild, brief anxiety caused by a stressful event such as a business presentation or a first date, anxiety disorders are chronic, relentless, and can grow progressively worse if not treated.

Effective treatments for anxiety disorders are available, and research is yielding new, improved therapies that can help most people with anxiety disorders lead productive, fulfilling lives. If you think you have an anxiety disorder, you should seek information and treatment.

There are five types of anxiety disorders; each has its own distinct features, but they are all bound together by the common theme of excessive, irrational fear and dread. They are:

- ❖ **Panic Disorder-** People with panic disorder have feelings of terror that strike suddenly and repeatedly with no warning. They can't predict when an attack will occur, and many develop intense anxiety between episodes, worrying when and where the next one will strike. Not everyone who experiences a panic attack will develop panic disorder. If you do have panic disorder, it is important to seek treatment as soon as possible.
- ❖ **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder-** Also called OCD, this involves anxious thoughts or rituals the person feels/he can't control. If you have OCD, you may be plagued by persistent, unwelcome thoughts or images, or by the urgent need to engage in certain rituals.
- ❖ **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder-** Also called PTSD, this is a debilitating condition that can develop following a terrifying event. The symptoms include nightmares or sleep disturbances, feelings of being detached or numb, loss of interest in previously pleasurable activities, and feelings of irritability. Symptoms last more than one month and can appear years after the traumatic event. People with PTSD often experience depression and can abuse substances.
- ❖ **Specific Phobias-** A specific phobia is an extreme, irrational fear of a specific thing, place or situation that poses little or no actual danger. Social Anxiety Disorder is a type of specific phobia. Other specific phobias would be fear of enclosed spaces or flying. While the person may realize that their fear is irrational, they still experience marked anxiety about it.
- ❖ **Generalized Anxiety Disorder-** People with generalized anxiety disorder experience chronic, exaggerated worry. The worry often causes physical reaction such as headaches, nausea, muscle tension or fatigue.

Are you wondering if you are experiencing an anxiety disorder? First Advantage EAP is sponsoring an anxiety disorder screening on February 16, 2005. Watch for more details.