

Anxiety

What is Anxiety?

Anxiety is a feeling of unease, such as worry or fear and can be mild or severe.

Everyone has feelings of anxiety at some point in their life, for example, feeling worried and anxious about sitting an exam or having a medical or job interview. Feeling anxious is sometimes perfectly normal. However, people with an anxiety disorder find it hard to control their worries. Their feelings of anxiety are more constant and often affect their daily life.

When anxiety affects daily life in this way, it is generalised anxiety disorder (GAD). This is a long-term condition which causes anxious feelings about a range of situations or issues rather than one specific thing.

Young people with anxiety usually experience anxiety in three ways:

- generalised anxiety disorder (GAD)
- panic attacks
- phobias

You may have anxiety because of your family history and genes or it could be down to something else like trauma in childhood. Some physical or mental health problems can make you anxious, for example, around half of people with depression have panic attacks at some point. It can be a mixture of things or part of your personality.

GAD – Generalised Anxiety Disorder - GAD affects 1 in 25 people in the UK and young people who have GAD worry a lot of the time and the anxiety makes doing everyday things difficult.

Panic attacks - These are feelings of extreme anxiety that come on in unpredictable attacks that usually last for about ten minutes. If you have panic attacks, you may have difficulties breathing and feel panicky and tend to feel out of control. The feelings gradually calm down and go away usually in about ten minutes but can leave you feeling quite shaken.

Phobias - People who have phobias tend to feel very nervous and panicky about one thing in particular. The thing that you might be anxious about may not be dangerous or troublesome to anyone else but can make you feel really nervous or panicky. The types of phobia can vary from agoraphobia – a fear of going outside – or a social phobia and meeting people to emetophobia, a phobia of vomit or vomiting.

Getting Help

If you feel like you are anxious or panicky a lot of the time, speak to your doctor and explain how you feel. You could always speak to the school nurse or the student welfare officer in school who can help you get the support you need.