



# Does Your 1 in 4 Have an Anxiety Disorder?



Most people experience feelings of anxiety before an important event such as a big exam, business presentation or first date. Anxiety disorders, however, are illnesses that cause people to feel frightened, distressed and uneasy for no apparent reason. Left untreated, these disorders can dramatically reduce productivity and significantly diminish an individual's quality of life.

## How Common Are Anxiety Disorders?

Anxiety disorders are among the most common mental illnesses in America; more than 40 million people are affected by these debilitating illnesses each year.

## What Are the Different Kinds of Anxiety Disorders?

### **Panic Disorder**

Characterized by panic attacks, which are sudden feelings of terror that strike repeatedly and without warning. Physical symptoms include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, abdominal discomfort, feelings of unreality, and fear of dying.

### **Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder**

Repeated, intrusive and unwanted thoughts or rituals that seem impossible to control.

### **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

Persistent symptoms that occur after experiencing a traumatic event such as war, rape, child abuse, natural disasters, or being taken hostage. Nightmares, flashbacks, numbing of emotions, depression, and feeling angry, irritable, distracted and being easily startled are common.

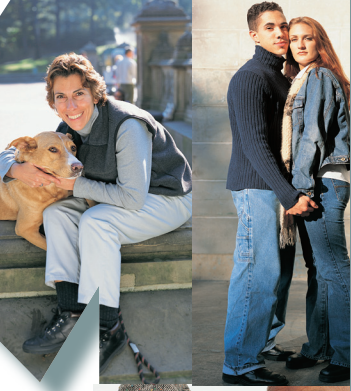
### **Phobia**

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.

### **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**

Chronic, exaggerated worry about everyday routine life events and activities, lasting at least six months; almost always anticipating the worst even though there is little reason to expect it. Often accompanied by physical symptoms, such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headache, or nausea.

do more for **1 in 4**



## What Are the Treatments for Anxiety Disorders?

Treatments have been largely developed through research conducted by research institutions. They are extremely effective and often combine medication or specific types of psychotherapy.

More medications are available than ever before to effectively treat anxiety disorders. These include antidepressants or benzodiazepines. If one medication is not effective, others can be tried. The most effective form of psychotherapy used to treat anxiety disorders is cognitive-behavioral therapy. Cognitive-behavioral therapy teaches patients to understand their thinking patterns so they can react differently to the situations that cause them anxiety.

## Is it Possible for Anxiety Disorders to Coexist with Other Physical or Mental Disorders?

It is common for an anxiety disorder to accompany another anxiety disorder, including such illnesses as substance abuse. Anxiety disorders can also coexist with physical disorders. In such instances, these disorders will also need to be treated. Before undergoing any treatment, it is important to have a thorough medical exam to rule out other possible causes.

## Other Resources

For help finding treatment, support groups, medication information, prescription assistance, our local Mental Health America affiliate offices, etc. we encourage you to use the resources found in the Frequently Asked Questions and Answers (FAQs) section of our website at [www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/faqs](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/information/faqs). Our FAQs are set up to help you link directly to the treatment, support groups, medication information, sections of the following websites and to many additional resources. If you or someone you know is in crisis, please call your local crisis center or 1-800-273-TALK (8255) to reach a 24 hour crisis center.

**Anxiety Disorders Association of America**  
(240) 485-1001  
[www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org)

**Obsessive-Compulsive Foundation**  
(203) 401-2070  
[www.ocfoundation.org](http://www.ocfoundation.org)

**Freedom From Fear**  
888-442-2022  
[www.freedomfromfear.org](http://www.freedomfromfear.org)

**National Institute of Mental Health**  
866-615-6464  
[www.nimh.nih.gov](http://www.nimh.nih.gov)



## PTSD-Specific Resources

**Sidran Institute**  
888-825-8249  
[www.sidran.org](http://www.sidran.org)

**MHA's Operation Healthy Reunions  
Military PTSD Information**  
[www.mentalhealthamerica.net/reunions/resources.cfm](http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/reunions/resources.cfm)

**National Center for Post  
Traumatic Stress Disorder**  
(802) 296-5132  
[www.ncptsd.org](http://www.ncptsd.org)

**Witness Justice**  
800-4WJ-HELP  
[www.witnessjustice.org/index.cfm](http://www.witnessjustice.org/index.cfm)

**International Society for  
Traumatic Stress Studies**  
(847) 480-9028  
[www.istss.org](http://www.istss.org)

**National Center for Victims of Crime (NCVC)**  
(202) 467-8700  
[www.ncvc.org](http://www.ncvc.org)

**Gift from Within**  
(207) 236-8858  
[www.giftfromwithin.org](http://www.giftfromwithin.org)

**SAMHSA National Center for  
Trauma-Informed Care**  
<http://mentalhealth.samhsa.gov/nctic/trauma.asp>

**Survivors Art Foundation**  
[www.survivorsartfoundation.org](http://www.survivorsartfoundation.org)



*The content of this fact sheet was adapted from material published by the National Institute of Mental Health and the Mayo Clinic.*