

Anxiety



Anxiety Disorder

Introduction

Feeling worried or nervous is a normal part of everyday life. Everyone frets or feels anxious from time to time. Mild to moderate anxiety can help you focus your attention, energy, and motivation. However, if anxiety is severe, you may have feelings of helplessness, confusion, and extreme worry that are out of proportion with the actual seriousness or likelihood of the feared event. Overwhelming anxiety that interferes with daily life is not normal and should be checked with a mental health professional. This type of anxiety may be a symptom of another problem, such as depression.

Anxiety affects the part of the brain that helps control how you communicate. This makes it more difficult to express yourself creatively or function effectively in relationships.

Anxiety can cause both emotional and physical symptoms.

Examples of anxiety disorders include panic attacks, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Overview and Facts

According to the studies done by IDRAAC, 1 out of 6 Lebanese (16.7% of the Lebanese population) will have an anxiety disorder at some point in their lives. However, Lebanese people can wait up to **28 years** before seeking any consultation for their anxiety disorders.

Symptoms

Physical symptoms of anxiety include:

- Trembling, twitching, or shaking.
- Feeling of fullness in the throat or chest.
- Breathlessness or rapid heartbeat.
- Lightheadedness or dizziness.
- Sweating or cold, clammy hands.
- Feeling jumpy.
- Muscle tension, aches, or soreness (myalgias).
- Extreme tiredness.
- Sleep problems, such as the inability to fall asleep or stay asleep, early awakening, or not feeling rested upon awakening.

Emotional symptoms of anxiety include:

- Restlessness, irritability, or feeling on edge or keyed up.
- Worrying too much.
- Fearing that something bad is going to happen; feeling doomed.
- Inability to concentrate; feeling like your mind goes blank.

Consult a doctor if:

- You feel like you are worrying too much and it is interfering with your work, relationships or other parts of your life
- You feel depressed

- You have suicidal thoughts or behaviors
- You are using alcohol or drugs to (treat) yourself
- Your worries may not go away on their own, and they may actually get worse over time if you don't seek help. See your doctor or a mental health provider before your anxiety gets worse.

It may be easier to treat if you address it early.

Causes and Risk Factors

Often the cause of anxiety disorders is not known. Many people with an anxiety disorder say they have felt nervous and anxious all their lives. This problem can occur at any age.

Children who have at least one parent with the diagnosis of depression are more than twice more likely to have an anxiety disorder than other children.

Women are twice as likely as men to have problems with anxiety disorders.

Anxiety disorders often occur with other problems, such as:

- Mental health problems, such as depression or substance abuse.
- A physical problem, such as heart or lung disease. A complete medical examination may be needed before an anxiety disorder can be diagnosed.

Some traumatic events can trigger anxiety disorders in people who are already prone to becoming anxious (people who have an anxious temperament).

In some cases, anxiety is linked to physical problems such as: thyroid problems, substance abuse, asthma, among others...

Tests and Diagnosis

To diagnose an anxiety disorder, a person should consult a mental health professional who will rely on scientific criteria to check whether he/she has an anxiety disorder. The doctor will perform a full examination including a mental health assessment.

Also, lab tests can be ordered to rule out other conditions, that can cause similar symptoms.

Treatment

The main treatments for anxiety disorders are:

- **Psychotherapy** which involves working with a therapist to reduce anxiety symptoms. Cognitive behavioral therapy is one of the most effective forms of psychotherapy for anxiety disorders. Generally a short-term treatment, cognitive behavioral therapy focuses on teaching you specific skills to gradually return to the activities you have avoided because of anxiety. Through this process, your symptoms improve as you build upon your initial success.

- **Medication** such as anxiolytics, antidepressants or sedatives.

- Antidepressants: which influence the activity of brain chemicals (neurotransmitters) thought to play a role in anxiety disorders.

- Buspirone: which is an anti-anxiety medication that may be used on an ongoing basis.

- Benzodiazepines: in some cases, these sedatives may be prescribed for relief of anxiety symptoms.

You may begin to feel better in about 1 to 3 weeks after you start taking medicine. But it can take as long as 6 to 8 weeks to see more improvement. If you have concerns about your medicine, or if you do not start to feel better by 3 weeks, talk to your doctor. He or she may increase the dose or change to a different medicine.

- **Combination of psychotherapy and medication**

Sources and Links

www.idraac.org

www.mayoclinic.com

www.webmd.com