

Social Anxiety Disorder



Social Anxiety Disorder/Social Phobia

Introduction

People with social anxiety disorder (or social phobia) are extremely anxious about what they will say or do in front of other people. This includes public speaking and day-to-day social situations.

The fear can begin weeks or months before an event. It can cause a fast heartbeat and make it hard to focus. Some people fear only one or a few types of social situations. For other people, many situations cause stress. This problem affects your daily life. You may be so stressed or afraid that you avoid public situations, including missing work and school.

Overview and Facts

According to the research done by IDRAAC, 1.9% of the Lebanese population have social anxiety disorder. However, Lebanese people can wait up to 28 years before seeking any consultation for their anxiety disorders in general.

Symptoms

Social anxiety disorder causes both emotional and physical symptoms:

Some emotional symptoms:

- Feeling nervous
- Feeling upset before or during a social event
- Worrying too much
- Feeling afraid that something bad will happen
- Inability to concentrate

Some physical symptoms include:

- Blushing
- Sweating
- Shivering, shaking
- Fast heartbeat

Consult a doctor if:

- If you fear and avoid normal social situations because they cause embarrassment, worry or panic
- If this type of anxiety disrupts your life, causes severe stress and affects your daily activities

Causes and Risk Factors

The cause of social anxiety disorder is still unknown.

It may run in families, but it is not sure if it is because of genetics or a response to a traumatic situation. Some research also suggests that brain chemistry and brain structure play a role in the etiology of social anxiety disorder.

Tests and Diagnosis

To diagnose social anxiety disorder, a person should consult a mental health professional who rely on scientific criteria to check whether he/she has social anxiety disorder.

The doctor will examine you and ask about your symptoms. He or she may ask other questions to see how you are doing emotionally. This is called a mental health assessment.

Your doctor may also do blood or urine tests to rule out other conditions, that can cause similar symptoms.

Treatment

Treatment of social anxiety disorder includes:

- Psychotherapy and counseling which involves working with a therapist to reduce anxiety symptoms
- Medication such as anxiolytics, antidepressants or sedatives.
- Combination of psychotherapy and medication

Whether you need medicine depends on how much the problem affects your daily life. If you already feel anxious around other people, it may be hard to ask for help. But treatment for social anxiety disorder works for many people.

Some people with social anxiety disorder turn to alcohol or drugs to help them relax. This can lead to addiction problems. They may also have depression. It is important to treat these issues too.

Sources and Links

www.idraac.org

www.mayoclinic.com

www.webmd.com