



# Information for Patients & Caregivers

Anxiety: What you need to know?

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## ANXIETY IS A NORMAL HUMAN EMOTION

### + WHAT IS ANXIETY DISORDER?

It is normal for people to worry about things from time to time, but some people get more anxious than others.

If you get excessive and uncontrollable anxiety and worry that lasts for 6 months or longer and interferes with your daily activities, eventually leading to difficulty in coping with everyday life, you may have *Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)*.

Your anxiety is an illness if you keep worrying over lots of things at once.

You may feel ill and tired of thinking, but you cannot stop or control your worrying even though you try.

### + SYMPTOMS OF ANXIETY DISORDER

Common symptoms include:

- Chronic worry about e.g., money, your family, your job
- Restlessness
- Feeling agitated
- Difficulty concentrating
- Fatigue and trouble falling asleep.
- Tense muscles

You may also have physical symptoms:

- Headaches
- Muscle pain
- Backaches.
- Dizziness.
- Diarrhoea.
- Pounding heart.
- Racing pulse.

### + ARE YOU IN THE RISK GROUP?

Some people have a higher chance of getting anxiety disorder. Women are more prone than men to have anxiety.

Other risk factors include:

- Family history of anxiety disorders.
- Substance abuse: smoking, alcohol or illicit substances.
- Having chronic diseases.
- Unemployment.
- Living alone.
- History of depression.
- Stressful life events such as loss of employment, divorce or domestic abuse.

Having adverse childhood experience or trauma in childhood can also increase your chance of getting anxiety disorder.

#### IMPORTANT:

Speak to your doctor if you have recently started or stopped taking a medication and got any of these symptoms.

### + WHAT WILL YOUR DOCTOR DO?

First, the doctor will ask you about your feelings and worries.

Feel free to talk to your doctor about things that are important to you. Try to be honest and objective.

Then, your doctor will examine you for signs that may suggest an underlying physical illness or medication effects.

In some cases, blood and urine samples may be requested to test for possible hormonal causes of anxiety (for example thyroid problems).



### + PSYCHOLOGICAL (TALKING) THERAPY

In addition to changes in your lifestyle, the doctor may recommend taking psychological or talking therapy.

Your doctor will consider your preference when recommending any of these treatments. Discuss your preferences with your doctor but note that different treatments suit different people.

*Low intensity psychological interventions* are based on the principles of cognitive behavioural therapy. They include:

- **Individual non-facilitated self-help:** You will be given written or electronic materials and instructions on how to use them.
- **Individual guided self-help:** Sessions can be organized over the telephone or face-to-face.
- **Psychoeducational groups:** You will join a group that may include up to 12 patients working with 1 specialist.

*High-intensity psychological interventions* are provided by trained specialists in 12 – 15 weekly sessions. These include:

- **Cognitive behavioural therapy.**
- **Applied relaxation.**

#### GOOD SLEEP HYGIENE TIPS:

- Sleep at night.
- Minimise naps.
- Avoid excessive light at night.
- Develop a bedtime routine.

TALKING TREATMENTS HELP TO REDUCE ANXIETY BUT YOU WILL NEED TO TAKE IT SERIOUSLY AND PRACTISE A LOT.



### + MEDICATIONS USED FOR TREATMENT

There are several medicines used to treat anxiety. The doctor's choice depends on several factors, including:

- Type and severity of your symptoms.
- Presence of other conditions such as other mental health disorder or depression.
- Your medication history and the list of drugs you are currently taking.
- Your pregnancy status and plans to get a child soon.
- Side effects of medicines that might affect you.



Drugs that are frequently used to treat anxiety disorder include:

#### Antidepressants.

It may take a few weeks for you to start feeling the effects of an antidepressant. Be patient and allow enough time for the antidepressants to have an effect.

#### Benzodiazepines.

They start working quickly and help you to relax. But they are only prescribed for a short time as they can be addictive.

#### Propranolol.

This may be prescribed if there are somatic features such as palpitation, sweating etc.

#### Antipsychotics.

These will be prescribed only by a psychiatrist if you have severe anxiety and not responded to other treatments.

Your doctor may offer a combination of medication and talking treatments.

### + OTHER APPROACHES YOU CAN CONSIDER

Exercises, meditation and relaxation techniques can help some people manage their anxiety.

Consider joining a local support group or an online group for people with anxiety. This will enable you to share your feelings and hear other people's stories.

### + THE OUTLOOK

If you are taking treatment and follow your doctor's recommendations, your symptoms will improve, and you will feel calm.

Your physical symptoms will improve along with your mood.

**All medications are best avoided in pregnancy. If you are pregnant or planning to get pregnant, please let your doctor know. Your doctor can recommend a treatment which is relatively safe in pregnancy.**

#### NOTE:

All medications have potential side effects but not everyone gets them. If you experience any side effects, please consult your doctor.

### + ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information on diagnosis and management of Generalized Anxiety Disorder can be found in the National Clinical Guideline published by The Ministry of Public Health (MoPH) Qatar.

The guideline is available to the public from the MoPH website: [www.moph.gov.qa](http://www.moph.gov.qa)