

# ANXIETY

Typically if you experience anxiety, you have thoughts that anticipate difficulties and danger based on your perception that something may be a threat and you may be in potential danger. As a result, your autonomic nervous systems is activated and may result in numerous physical changes (e.g. increased heart rate) that reinforce the feeling that something is wrong or danger is imminent. While everyone has felt worried at times and may find it difficult to manage fears and anxieties, if those feelings occur frequently and are impairing daily functioning, the anxiety may become pathological.

## What are the symptoms of anxiety?

1. **Physical symptoms:** Chest pains, racing heart, tremors, muscle tension, light-headedness, nausea, indigestion, sweaty palms.
2. **Emotional symptoms:** Feelings of nervousness, anxiety, panicky, irritability.
3. **Behavioural symptoms:** Avoiding situations where anxiety is experienced, leaving situations when anxiety begins to occur, trying to do things perfectly or trying to control events to prevent danger, difficulty sleeping, restlessness.
4. **Cognitive symptoms:** Overestimating danger, underestimating own capacity to cope, worrying, catastrophising thoughts, and difficulty concentrating.

## What are the different types of anxiety?

A few of the most common anxiety disorders that are listed in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Psychiatric Disorders (DSM-IV) are as follows:

- **Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD):** excessive and uncontrollable worrying about a range of topics (e.g. finances, health, work, study).
- **Agoraphobia:** fear and avoid certain places – typically where it is difficult to escape – where you may have a panic attack (e.g. fear of leaving the house, fear of traveling in trains or planes, fear of going over bridges or through tunnels, fear of lifts)
- **Panic Disorder:** When panic attacks are recurrent, uncontrollable and disabling.
- **Specific Phobia:** Intense fear of a particular object or situation (e.g. fear of: animals, blood, flying, heights)
- **Social Phobia:** fear of social or performance situations where one may be embarrassed (e.g. public speaking, dating, meeting new people)
- **Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):** characterised by obsessions (e.g. fear of germ contamination) and compulsions (e.g. washing hands five times)
- **Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):** develops after an experience of a threat, such as a natural disaster (bushfires and floods) or personal disaster (childhood physical or sexual abuse, rape, attempted murder). Sufferers have many symptoms (nightmares, panic attacks and intrusive thoughts) and generally try to avoid reminders of the trauma.

*For more information on our services, contact us on **02 8243 1500** or at **admin@cfch.com.au***