

# Anxiety



Anxiety is a normal response to stressful situations. It can improve alertness and performance when the onset and intensity are appropriate to the situation. However when it becomes severe, prolonged and interferes with everyday life then it can become a problem.

## Psychological symptoms

- Fearfulness
- Unable to concentrate
- Disturbed sleep
- Feeling of fatigue
- Irritability or anger

## Physical symptoms

- Dry mouth
- Sweating
- Diarrhoea
- Frequent urination
- Palpitations
- Muscle tension
- Tension headache
- Dizziness
- Shortness of breath

## Possible causes

The causes of severe or chronic anxiety are unclear, but some possible causes are:

- Natural response to life events or life threatening situations (usually short-term)
- Depressive illness, leading to anxiety state
- May follow acute life threatening situation: post-traumatic stress
- Can occur in physical conditions eg over-active thyroid gland

## Treatment

Depends on factors such as the type of anxiety disorder and the cause. Counselling can be effective as can cognitive-behavioural therapy. Medications can also be effective in reducing symptoms. Antidepressant drugs can be used. Beta-blockers may also be used.