

Health tip: Coping with Anxiety

When we think of “anxiety,” we often think of feeling stressed. Anxiety is our body’s reaction to a threat. Without it, we might not respond to danger – and survival would be unlikely. Anxiety isn’t just about life-or-death situations. Because our minds are wired to protect us, we often perceive more threats than exist, which can make anxiety feel stronger than necessary.

Everyone experiences anxiety, and for many, it can feel overwhelming. Having anxiety, or an anxiety disorder, doesn’t mean someone is weak. With the right care, they may manage it and lead happy, successful lives.¹

Key Facts and Stats

- Anxiety disorders are the world’s most common mental disorders, affecting 359 million people in 2021²
- Anxiety disorders are the most common mental illness in the U.S., affecting 40 million adults age 18 and older every year³
- Anxiety disorders are highly treatable, yet only 1 in 4 people in need (27.6%) receive any treatment³
- Anxiety disorders develop from a complex set of risk factors, including genetics, brain chemistry, personality, and life events³

Symptoms of Anxiety:^{4, 5, 6}

Physical	Mental & Emotional	Cognitive
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath • Racing heart • Sweating • Stomach discomfort • Headaches • Muscle tension 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Racing or intrusive thoughts • Difficulty concentrating • Restlessness • Emotional withdrawal or “shutting down” • Feeling disconnected or numb • Increased substance use as unhealthy coping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Expecting failure • Believing you are incapable • Assuming situations will end badly



Myths about anxiety

- Anxiety will go away on its own³
- Anxiety is not a real medical or health issue
- It’s obvious someone has an anxiety disorder⁷

Strategies that may help manage anxiety⁸

Having an action plan:

- Write down your specific worries
- Consider taking a break if you become overwhelmed while writing down your worries
- Make a list of all possible solutions that you may think of
- Do not get hung up on creating “perfect” options
- Focus on the things you may problem solve or change

Divert the mind to other activities:

- Take time outs
- Limit media
- Practice a mindfulness technique
- Nurture your body
- Limit alcohol and caffeine
- Maintain a consistent bed-time

Resources to get help:⁹

- Primary care doctor or other health professional
- Contact your Employee Assistance Program (EAP)
- Speak with a friend or family member who you may ask for help
- Local support group
- Call your insurance company for an in-network referral
- National Suicide Prevention Lifeline **988**
- SAMHSA Treatment Referral Helpline **1-800-662-HELP** or **1-800-662-4357**



Sources:

1. McLean Hospital. <https://www.mcleanhospital.org/essential/anxiety>. 2026. Accessed April 2026.
2. WHO. <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/anxiety-disorders>. 2025. Accessed April 2026.
3. ADAA. <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/facts-statistics>. 2026. Accessed April 2026.
4. NIH. <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders>. 2024. Accessed April 2026.
5. Mental Health America. <https://screening.mhanational.org/anxiety/>. 2024. Accessed April 2026.
6. Mental Health America. <https://screening.mhanational.org/content/i-cant-stop-thinking-about-bad-things-could-happen/?pathway=3366>. 2024. Accessed April 2026.
7. ADAA. <https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/myths-realities>. 2025. Accessed April 2026.
8. ADAA. <https://adaa.org/tips>. 2026. Accessed April 2026.
9. SAMHSA. <https://www.samhsa.gov/mental-health/what-is-mental-health/conditions/anxiety#generalized-anxiety>. 2025. Accessed April 2026.

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