

Tips for Handling Social Anxiety

Tips to Help Keep Your Health On Track!

Everyone gets nervous in social situations. Perhaps you've experienced some anxiety when giving a presentation or meeting someone new for the first time. Maybe you are shy or more reserved than some of your family members or friends. If, however, your everyday experiences are causing you significant anxiousness, self-consciousness, fear, or a feeling that you are being judged by others, you may be experiencing social phobia or a social anxiety disorder. Become familiar with the signs and symptoms of social anxiety. If you believe you are affected by social anxiety, contact your doctor or a mental health professional to ensure your overall wellness. ⁽¹⁾

Is it normal nervousness or social anxiety?

Fear, avoidance, and anxiousness beyond a normal level of nervousness can significantly impact your day-to-day routine, work, school, or other activities. Some of the signs and symptoms of social anxiety are: ⁽¹⁾

- Uncomfortable in situations where you may be judged
- Constant worry of embarrassing yourself
- Afraid you will upset or offend someone
- Fear of physical symptoms that might appear, such as sweating, rash, or trembling
- Always expecting the most negative outcome from any social interaction

Are you avoiding certain social situations?

If you are avoiding everyday interactions or experiences, you may have social anxiety. Some possible triggers of social anxiousness are avoidance of: ⁽¹⁾

- Interactions with strangers
- Entering a room where most others are already seated
- Starting a conversation
- Eating in front of others
- Difficulty making eye contact
- Attending social gatherings or parties
- Getting yourself to work or school

Physical symptoms of social anxiety

Some of the physical symptoms that can be present when feeling anxious or nervous are: ⁽¹⁾

- Nausea, diarrhea, and upset stomach
- Faster than normal heart rate or trouble catching your breath
- Muscle tension
- Dizziness or feeling lightheaded, or feeling confused and unfocused

Possible causes of social anxiety

Social anxiety disorders are due to various factors. Some of the possible reasons are: ⁽¹⁾

- **Inherited** – Social disorders tend to run in families, but it remains unclear as to how much is due to genetics versus learned behavior.
- **Environment** – Many individuals absorb what they see and learn. Witnessing the anxious behavior of others and/or having parents who are overprotective or controlling may cause another individual to be socially anxious.
- **Brain structure** – Brains contain a structure called *amygdala*, and this structure may contribute to how someone controls fear. Individuals who have an overactive amygdala may have a greater fear response, increasing their anxiety in social circumstances.

Should I see a doctor?

Avoiding situations that cause anxiety, fear, or panic can help you feel better, but the anxiousness probably won't subside over the long term. If you experience signs or symptoms of anxiety that are disrupting your everyday life, reach out to your doctor as help is available. ⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ www.mayoclinic.com

This is informational only, not a replacement for the medical advice of your physician.
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