

## LOOK FOR THE SIGNS OF PROBLEMS WITH ANXIETY

### Feelings

- Feeling scared, worried or on edge
- Feeling irritated or angry
- Feeling uneasy

### Thoughts

- “What if...”
- “Something terrible will happen”
- “I’m just going to embarrass myself and everyone will laugh at me”
- “Nothing ever works out...I’m a failure”
- “Why can’t you just do it my way?”
- “I don’t know why I can’t control this”
- “Is it normal to feel like this?”

### Actions

- Avoiding things, people, or places that make you feel anxious
- Often using distractions to avoid anxiety
- Checking things often to make sure everything is okay
- Often seeking reassurance from others
- Struggling to pay attention or concentrate
- Getting very angry at other people over little things
- Feeling very restless, like you can’t sit still

### Changes in your body

- Racing heart
- Sweating more than usual
- Difficulties sleeping well
- Feeling tired often
- Muscle aches and pains
- More stomach aches than usual

## LEARN MORE

**HeretoHelp** at [www.heretohelp.bc.ca](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca) has information about many different mental health problems. You can also read personal stories, find self-care ideas in the Wellness Modules, learn more about treatments, and take screening self-tests to check your mental health.

**AnxietyBC** has information on anxiety and anxiety disorders and self-help resources to help you manage anxiety at home. They have a site for youth at [youth.anxietybc.com](http://youth.anxietybc.com). Their free app, MindShift, can help you learn more helpful ways to think and helpful ways to relax. The app has tools for situations like text anxiety, performance anxiety, perfectionism, and conflict.

**Blue Wave**, a program from the Canadian Mental Health Association’s BC Division, helps youth take charge of their mental health and share their voice. Visit [www.bluewavebc.ca](http://www.bluewavebc.ca) to find information and resources, learn about wellness courses and bursaries, or get involved.

**Mindcheck** at [www.mindcheck.ca](http://www.mindcheck.ca) helps you look at your mental health and find resources or support. You can take a quiz to check your mental health, and their self-care resources include apps and websites you can try on your own.

## WANT MORE INFO ON ANXIETY?

This brochure is part of a series on youth and anxiety. To learn more about dealing with anxiety, finding help, and feeling better, see *Dealing with Anxiety: For Youth* at [www.heretohelp.bc.ca/for-youth](http://www.heretohelp.bc.ca/for-youth).

FOR YOUTH

## LEARN ABOUT ANXIETY



**Canadian Mental Health Association**  
British Columbia  
*Mental health for all*



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The Canadian Mental Health Association, BC Division is proud to be affiliated with HeretoHelp. HeretoHelp is a project of the BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information, a group of non-profit agencies providing good-quality information to help individuals and families maintain or improve their mental well-being. The BC Partners are funded by BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, an agency of the Provincial Health Services Authority.

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**heretohelp**  
Mental health and substance use  
information you can trust

We all feel worried or anxious from time to time. It can feel a bit uncomfortable, but it's totally normal. In fact, a little bit of anxiety can be a good thing! The problem is that too much anxiety too often can make us feel unwell. You can't get rid of all worry and anxiety in your life, but you can learn how to thrive anyway—and learn when to ask for extra help.

## EVERYONE FEELS ANXIETY...

Anxiety is a normal, expected response to a difficult situation. Anxiety is our body's way of telling us that there is danger. These days, we don't spend a lot of time *actually* running away from scary things. Instead, we feel threatened when we're having a hard time at a school or arguing with someone at home.



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Some anxiety is helpful. It can help motivate us to get things done or give you an extra push to finish an assignment, try out for a sports team, or talk to someone you like.

## ... BUT SOMETIMES ANXIETY CAN GET OUT OF CONTROL

Normally, anxiety ...

- Is a reaction to something specific, like an upcoming test
- Fits the situation—for example, a small problem causes only a small amount of anxiety
- Is realistic—your anxiety makes sense, given the situation
- Ends when the situation is over

Anxiety starts to become a problem when ...

- It feels like it came out of nowhere
- Is much stronger than you'd expect
- It's unrealistic—such as focusing on something awful happening over a little issue
- It stays with you, even when the situation is over

Too much anxiety too often can start to cause harm and stop you from getting the most out of life. It may not mean you have a mental illness like an anxiety disorder, but it can still have an impact on your life. It's a sign that you might need some extra support.

## ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE MENTAL ILLNESSES

There are a few different anxiety disorders, and they have different symptoms. In general, someone with an anxiety disorder may have a lot of anxiety and it usually feels really hard to control it. Someone who has an anxiety disorder may avoid places or things that make them feel anxious. They may have a hard time going about their daily life. Anxiety disorders can be scary, but they can be treated! You don't have to deal with it all on your own.

## STRESS VS. ANXIETY

Stress and anxiety can feel really similar, but they are a bit different. The causes of stress are usually easier to figure out and after a stressful event is over you usually start to feel better. Stress is also often about having too much to cope with (feeling overwhelmed) or being prevented from doing something you need to do (feeling frustrated). Anxiety can also feel overwhelming and frustrating, but the focus is usually more about the future. Some people may even feel a lot of anxiety about the anxiety itself.

## PANIC ATTACKS

are a feeling of extreme anxiety. Someone who is experiencing a panic attack will suddenly feel intense fear. They may feel shaky, start sweating, hear or feel their heart pounding, and feel dizzy, nauseous, or even disconnected from reality. The feelings peak within a few minutes, but it can take a bit more time to settle down. Panic attacks can come up when you're under a lot of stress, but they can also be part of an anxiety disorder or other mental illness. If you start to experience panic attacks, it's best to talk to your doctor or school counsellor.

## ANXIETY DISORDERS ARE NOT YOUR FAULT

Anxiety disorders are types of anxiety problems that don't go away on their own and cause a big impact on your life. Anxiety disorders are probably caused by more than one thing. This includes changes in your body, your family history or genes, stressful or scary events, and the way you learned to deal with anxiety when you were a kid. Different ways of thinking and understanding the world can add to problem anxiety. There are a few different anxiety disorders, and they have different symptoms. In general, someone with an anxiety disorder may have a lot of anxiety and it usually feels really hard to control it. Someone who experiences an anxiety disorder may avoid places or things that make them feel anxious. They may have a hard time going about their daily life.