



ANXIETY



WHY DOES ANXIETY HAPPEN



Anxiety is one of the most common mental health issues in Canada, with 1 in 8 people in BC being affected every year. (2)

Everyone feels anxiety at times! An anxiety disorder is when someone feels intense distress or fear for long periods which isn't in proportion to real events, and their anxiety interferes with day-to-day life.

Anxiety can be caused by a combination of factors including biology, genetics, cognitive function and personal circumstances, and can also be affected by social and economic factors. People with stressful jobs or chronic illnesses, people who are shy or worry often, women, and people with perfectionistic tendencies are all more likely to develop anxiety. (1, 2)

WHAT DOES IT FEEL LIKE?

Someone with anxiety may experience restlessness, irritability, worrying that something bad is going to happen, feeling doomed, trouble concentrating or mentally 'blinking'. Physical symptoms can include trembling, shaking, feeling short of breath, a rapid heart rate, dizziness, sweating, clammy hands, muscle tension, extreme fatigue and difficulty sleeping. Some people are anxious and they're not even sure why, except that they feel anxious about everything and nothing all at once. (3)

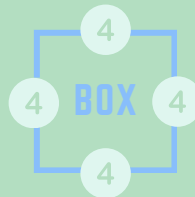
PANIC ATTACKS



Panic attacks are common and can also happen to people without anxiety disorders. They tend to occur without a clear reason and in the absence of any danger, and involve intense and extreme feelings of fear. Panic attacks can last about 5-20 minutes, and often tend to subside after 10 minutes.

Although panic attacks can feel very scary, they are not harmful. In a panic attack it may feel as if you are losing control of yourself or even as if you are dying, and you might breathe quickly, have a rapid heartbeat, feel tightness in your chest or feel sweaty, dizzy or shaky.

If you are experiencing a panic attack, remind yourself that it will not harm you, and give yourself permission to allow the panic attack to happen. Remember that in time your body will return to a more calm state on its own, and if needed you can try a relaxation technique such as breathing out longer than you breathe in, or tensing and relaxing different muscle groups (known as progressive muscle relaxation) until you return to a more relaxed state. (3)



BREATHING

Breathing exercises are a simple way to relax when feeling anxious. Box breathing involves breathing in for 4 seconds, holding for 4 seconds, breathing out for 4 seconds, and holding for 4 seconds - then repeat. This method is so effective at lowering blood pressure that it isn't recommended for folks with medical conditions where low blood pressure or heart rate should be avoided. Or, if box breathing feels too complicated or rigid, try simply breathing out longer than you're breathing in. (1)

EXERCISE

Any form of regular exercise will be helpful for individuals with anxiety. Research shows that high-intensity exercise can be especially helpful, but any activity that gets your heart rate up will help reduce muscle tension, build resilience against intense emotions, and increase the availability of important anti-anxiety neurochemicals. The important thing is to find something you like doing, and that you can sustain over time. (5)

SLEEP

Improving your sleep can help your anxiety. Establish a time to wake up at every day, even on weekends and even if you didn't sleep well the night before. At night if it takes more than 30-60 minutes to fall asleep, get out of bed and try a boring or relaxing activity. (4)



SUBSTANCES

Caffeine can increase your anxiety, so limit your intake of coffee, tea, chocolate and caffeinated pop. And while substances like alcohol and recreational drugs may appear to temporarily reduce your anxiety, they can contribute to even greater anxiety and depression in the future. (1)

TREATMENT



There are effective treatments for anxiety disorders! As each type of anxiety disorder is different, treatment will depend on what type of anxiety you are experiencing.

To get started, talk with your doctor or mental health professional about feeling anxious, and ask about your options. These may include different types of therapy, group support, lifestyle changes or medication.



If you are caring for someone with anxiety, you may notice that they tend to avoid the situations that make them feel anxious. While this is a natural response, avoidance is known for increasing anxiety in the long run. However, pushing them to confront their fears before they are ready can also increase their anxiety and cause distrust in your relationship. The best way to help your loved one is to gently nudge them to face their fears, but to stop pushing if they feel a specific situation is too frightening. In that case, help them think of other creative ways to address their fears. Collaborate with them on how they would like to work through this fear, at a pace they feel comfortable with. Anxiety can at times also feel 'contagious', so it can be helpful to explore your own relationship with anxiety and how best to ground yourself in anxious or stressful situations. By remaining calm you can help your loved one to regulate. (6)



LOVED ONES

MORE INFORMATION

1. <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/healthy-living/your-health/diseases/mental-health-anxiety-disorders.html>
2. <https://cmha.bc.ca/documents/anxiety-disorders/>
3. <https://www.healthlinkbc.ca/health-topics/anxty>
4. <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/getting-a-good-nights-sleep/>
5. <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/can-exercise-help-treat-anxiety-2019102418096>
6. <https://www.anxietycanada.com/articles/how-friends-and-family-can-help/>

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24/7 HELP LINES - PHONE

1-800-SUICIDE	1-800-784-2433
Crisis Line / Mental Health Support	310-6789 (no area code needed)
Fraser Health Crisis Line	604-951-8855
Kids Help Line (BC)	310-1234 (no area code needed)
Kids Help Line (Canada)	1-800-668-6868
KUU-US Crisis Line (Aboriginal)	1-800-588-8717
VictimLink	1-800-563-0808
Youth Against Violence Line	1-800-680-4264
Child Protection Services BC	1-800-663-9122

TEXT OR ONLINE CHAT

YouthSpace (Text)	778-783-0177
Youth Against Violence (Text)	604-836-6381
youthinbc.com	Daily from 12pm - 1am
youthspace.ca	Daily from 6pm - 12am
kidshelpphone.ca	Wed - Sun, 3pm - 11pm

SUBSTANCE USE HELP

Alcohol and Drug Resources	604-660-9382
Pacific Community Resource Society	604-836-6273
Little House Society (Tsawwassen)	778-434-3119
Alcoholics Anonymous	604-434-3933
Narcotics Anonymous	604-873-1018

MENTAL WELLBEING APPS

BoosterBuddy
Calm
Headspace
Mindshift
MyLife