

Anxiety Disorders

Most people get worried or feel stressed from time to time, and the feeling usually goes away after a while. A person may have an **anxiety disorder** if the fears are **excessive, have been present over a period of time**, and **affect how the person functions** with people, at home, and at school or work. Anxiety disorders are **treatable conditions**. Recognizing the presence, and the type, of anxiety disorder is important for deciding on the best treatment options.

Types of Anxiety Disorders

All ages

- **Generalized anxiety disorder** – Having excessive worries most days for over 6 months. The worries are about a number of things and are hard to control. The worries come with multiple physical symptoms, e.g. muscle tightness, sleep difficulties, trouble concentrating.
- **Social anxiety disorder** (social phobia) – Having excessive worries about being judged in social situations. This anxiety causes great distress and/or avoidance of situations, lasts more than 6 months, and impairs day-to-day functioning.
- **Obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD)** – Having unwanted and distressing thoughts and fears (obsessions) over and over and over that may lead the person to feel an uncontrollable urge to repeat certain behaviors (compulsions) over and over. Attempts to ignore these may make them worse.
- **Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** – Having flashbacks, nightmares, and anxiety for several months or longer after a scary event.

In children and youth

- **Specific phobia** – Having intense, irrational, beyond-usual fear of things like certain animals, environments, situations, blood, etc.
- **Separation anxiety disorder** – Feeling excessive distress about being away from home or loved ones. Young children usually experience separation anxiety as a part of normal development, but most outgrow it by about 3 years of age.

In adults

- **Panic disorder** – Having repeated panic attacks (intense fear including pounding heart, sweating, trembling, etc.) for no reason, plus at least one month of worries about having more panic attacks and significant behavior changes due to this fear of having more panic attacks.

How Common are Anxiety Disorders?

In children and adolescents

General population: ~7%
22q11.2DS: ~35%
22q11.2DupS: ~30%

In adults

General population: ~20-25%
22q11.2DS: About 2 to 3 times more common than the general population
22q11.2DupS: ~30%

Anxiety disorders are the most common group of treatable mental health conditions in adults with 22q11.2DS.

These disorders may be somewhat more common in females than males.

Many individuals with 22q11.2DS have **anticipatory anxiety**, which means that they worry excessively about what might happen, ahead of an event such as an appointment.

Anxiety disorders have been mentioned in medical literature on 22q11.2 duplication syndrome, but more research is needed.

Anxiety Disorders – Continued

Factors Associated with an Increased Risk of Anxiety Disorders

- Family history of anxiety disorders
- Stressful events (e.g., bullying, conflicts, illness or death in the family etc.)
- Caffeine, alcohol, drugs, and certain medications

Features Common to All Anxiety Disorders

- Fear that is beyond reason and above normal
- Nervousness, tense feelings
- Difficulty managing daily tasks and/or the distress related to these tasks

Worsening of emotional or **temper outbursts may be a sign of untreated or undertreated anxiety disorders.**

Treatments for Anxiety Disorders

- **Adjust the environment to decrease undue stress**
 - If there is a mismatch between the individual's abilities and environmental demands, symptoms may improve when the balance is restored. This may mean a change in school or work demands and expectations.
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**
 - Individuals can learn to identify inaccuracies in their thinking and consider situations from different perspectives.
 - An effective treatment in the general population, the therapist may need to adjust the CBT protocol to suit the individual level of intellectual ability.
- **Anti-anxiety medications**
 - Several medications are available that are safe and effective for the treatment of anxiety disorders. The range available may be different for children than for adults.

The Complexity of 22q11.2DS

- For all forms of treatment, the healthcare provider will, along with the patient and caregivers, carefully monitor for treatment adherence, for improved symptoms, and for any unwanted side effects.
- The diagnosis and treatment will be provided in the context of the other health issues present in the individual.

References / Resources

Mayo Clinic, AZ, USA

- [Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder \(OCD\)](#)
- [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder \(PTSD\)](#)
- [Separation Anxiety Disorder](#)

Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH), Toronto, ON, Canada

- [Anxiety Disorders](#)
- [Generalized Anxiety Disorder](#)
- [Panic Disorder](#)
- [Specific Phobias](#)
- [Social Anxiety Disorder](#)

22q11 Europe

- [Cognitive Development And Mental Health](#) – Free videos. Videos 9 is on anxiety and depression - 2022

Medical Research Reports

- [Neurodevelopmental functioning in probands and non-proband carriers of 22q11.2 microduplication](#) (2022)
- [Understanding the pediatric psychiatric phenotype of 22q11.2 deletion syndrome](#) (2018)
- [Elevated prevalence of generalized anxiety disorder in adults with 22q11.2 deletion syndrome](#) (2010)