

## Contact us

For further information or advice, please speak to a member of staff or

### **SANEline / SANEmail**

1st Floor Cityside House, 40 Adler Street, London, E1 1EE  
helpline:0845 767 8000, fax: 020 7375 2162  
[www.sane.org.uk](http://www.sane.org.uk)

For information on Trust Services, visit  
[www.awp.nhs.uk](http://www.awp.nhs.uk)

## PALS

To make a comment, raise a concern or make a complaint, please contact the Trust's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Tel: 01225 362900  
Freephone: 0800 073 1778  
Email: [awp.pals@nhs.net](mailto:awp.pals@nhs.net)

## Other formats and languages

If you need this information in other formats (such as large print, Braille) or in another language, please call the PALS number.

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Avon and Wiltshire  
Mental Health Partnership  
NHS Trust

# Anxiety

For those who are experiencing  
disabling levels of fear or worry

you matter, we care

Anxiety is another name for the fears, stresses, worries and concerns which are a part of everyday life.

Some anxiety is a normal part of everyday life and a manageable level of anxiety is helpful in that it prepares us to face the daily challenges which are part of modern living.

But too much anxiety can be disabling and can. It can cause lack of confidence, social isolation, an increase in alcohol and drug use, or sometimes feelings of self-harm

### **When is help required?**

When anxiety overwhelms us and prevents us from living our normal lives then this natural process has become a problem that needs to be dealt with. Short-lived but intense 'panic attacks' and long term feelings of anxiety can be very disabling.

The unpleasant feelings: palpitations, racing heart, nausea, headache, restlessness and sweating are the body's response to the hormone adrenaline which is preparing us to fight danger or to run away from it.

These feelings might be helpful if a lion is chasing us, but not if we want to go out to do some shopping! The aim of any treatment programme to control such excessive anxiety is to enable us to manage these feelings and put them back into their proper place.

Sometimes the anxiety is part of another problem, perhaps depression, withdrawal from alcohol, a side effect of a medication or very occasionally a symptom of a physical illness. Our attempts to avoid the sources of anxiety can also contribute to the development of social and other phobias.

### **What can be done to help?**

However, there are a range of very effective treatments and self-help initiatives which can help and make a big difference.

- An anxiety management course will cover a range of topics which will help the person understand causes of anxiety and how to control it.
- Relaxation techniques help manage physical symptoms.
- Supported exposure to the situations which cause most anxiety helps overcome any phobias.
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) and psychotherapy can help to explore the triggers and thought processes that give rise to anxiety with a view to gaining control over them.
- Social engagement can be a source of anxiety but can also reduce the isolation that can occur.
- Physical activity from a brisk walk to gardening, 'burns up' the adrenaline so it no longer causes the physical symptoms.
- Antidepressant medication helps lift mood, which in turn helps us use coping strategies that work.
- Medication for anxiety works well, but has to be used with care so as not to make the symptoms worse when it is stopped.