

Educational Links (English):

- ❖ <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>
- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/partnersincarecampaign/anxietyandphobias.aspx>
- ❖ <http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/shynessandsocialphobia.aspx>
- ❖ <https://www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/social-anxiety-disorder>
- ❖ <http://www.mayoclinic.org/diseases-conditions/social-anxiety-disorder/basics/definition/con-20032524>
- ❖ <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/social-phobia-social-anxiety-disorder-always-embarrassed/index.shtml>
- ❖ <https://www.adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/specific-phobias>
- ❖ <http://www.webmd.com/anxiety-panic/specific-phobias>
- ❖ http://www2.nami.org/factsheets/specificphobias_factsheet.pdf



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Educational Booklet: Social & Specific Phobias

Fear and anxiety are part of life. A person may feel anxious before taking an exam or walking down a dark street. This type of anxiety is useful because it allows us to be more alert or more careful. It usually ends shortly after it comes out of the situation that caused it.

However, for many people anxiety does not go away and worsens over time thus developing anxiety disorders.

Unlike relatively mild and transient anxiety caused by a stressful event, anxiety disorders last at least six months and can get worse if left untreated.

Different anxiety disorders include:

- ❖ Panic disorder
- ❖ Obsessive-compulsive disorder
- ❖ Post-traumatic stress disorder
- ❖ Social Phobia (Social Anxiety Disorder) and Specific Phobias
- ❖ Generalized anxiety disorder

What is social phobia?

It is a disease in which social situations cause fear, nervousness and unjustified rejection. The person avoids social situations and is always afraid to be ridiculed. Your fear can be so strong that it prevents you from doing your daily tasks.

What are specific phobias?

A specific phobia is an intense and irrational fear of something that is actually a minimal or no threat.

Symptoms of phobias:

Those suffering from phobias experience an exaggerated fear of being judged negatively by others or are exaggeratedly afraid of confronting the feared object or situation. That is why they constantly avoid social activities or feared objects because when exposed to this they suffer a great tension and symptoms such as:

- ❖ Redness
- ❖ Palpitations
- ❖ Fast and profuse breathing
- ❖ Tremor
- ❖ Feeling insecure
- ❖ Feeling stalked, uncomfortable, with unpleasant sensations

Examples of situations feared when you have social phobia:

- * Go to parties meetings * Meet new people
- * Giving a speech * Acting in front of the public
- * Perform loving conquests * Participate in meetings

Usually, people with a social phobia worry weeks before an event and can do anything to avoid or cancel the event.

Examples of specific phobias:

The most common specific phobias are to heights, escalators, tunnels, driving on roads, enclosed spaces, water, flying, dogs, spiders, and bloody wounds.

Studies indicate that...

- ❖ Social phobia and specific phobias usually begin in childhood or adolescence.
- ❖ Social phobia and specific phobias are more common in women than in men.
- ❖ Social phobia can be hereditary.
- ❖ In specific phobia, if the situation or object that causes fear is easy to avoid, people may not seek help; but if it interferes with their lives, this can lead to seeking treatment.
- ❖ If no treatment is received, social phobia can last a lifetime.

Treatment of Social Phobia and Specific Phobias:

Phobias are anxiety disorders and can be treated with medications or cognitive behavioral psychological therapy. The best results are obtained with a combination treatment.

Remember:

- ❖ If you think you have an anxiety disorder, the first person you should consult is your doctor. A doctor will be able to determine whether the symptoms that alarm you are due to an anxiety disorder, another medical condition, or both.
- ❖ If an anxiety disorder is diagnosed, the next step is usually to consult a mental health professional.
- ❖ Once you start medicines, it is important not to abruptly discontinue them. Certain medications should be reduced gradually under the supervision of a doctor or negative reactions may occur.
- ❖ Many people with anxiety disorders benefit from joining a self-help or support group and sharing their problems and accomplishments with others.
- ❖ Stress management and meditation techniques can help you calm down and can improve the effects of therapy.
- ❖ Aerobic exercises can have a calming effect.
- ❖ Caffeine, illegal drugs, and even some unprescribed cold medications should be avoided as they can aggravate symptoms of anxiety disorders.
- ❖ Your family or friends can be a great source of support.

For questions or concerns, discuss it with your doctor.