

What is anxiety?

Anxiety can be described as a feeling of unease, most often worry or fear, that can range from mild to severe. It is important to know that anxiety is a normal emotion that everybody experiences at times throughout their lives. Situations such as a job interview or sitting an exam for example may trigger this, even a change of circumstances or environment. Most of us will have experienced feelings of anxiety at some point over the past year as a result of the effects of Covid-19 on our personal and working lives. For some people, they may notice that they find it hard to be in control of their worries and the anxiety can feel constant. When this happens, it can often affect their daily lives and can impact on their ability to complete day-to-day tasks.

How can I recognise when I am feeling anxious?

Anxiety is something that can be felt in your head, in your body and in the everyday things that you do. Some common symptoms of anxiety are:

- **An increase in heart rate**
A faster heart rate and increase in the strength of the heartbeat.
- **Changes to your breathing**
The increase in speed and depth of breathing can cause feelings of breathlessness, and tightness and pain in the chest, causing unpleasant symptoms such as dizziness.
- **Increased sweating**
Excessive sweating, whether that be sweaty palms or body flushes.
- **Muscle tension**
Tension in muscle groups across the body leading to aches, pains and sometimes shaking.
- **Digestive problems**
Many people experience symptoms such as a dry mouth, upset stomach, nausea, vomiting or diarrhoea.
- **Cognitive changes**
Lack of concentration, irrational and negative thoughts, and rumination.
- **Behavioural responses**
Two main behaviours are associated with fear and anxiety: fight or flight. This can often result in overwhelming urges to respond to situations with aggression or to run away or avoid.



Here are some helpful tips for managing anxiety

Take time to switch off and relax

This can range from trying out relaxed breathing exercises to taking the time to sit with a hot drink or having a bath. Think about the different things that you do that help you to relax and why. It can also be helpful to open up this discussion to your colleagues, friends or family, asking "how do you chill out?" It can make for some interesting suggestions!

Get involved in some exercise

Physical exercise releases endorphins - the feel good hormones. It can also reduce how much anxiety people feel in response to stress in their lives. Notice opportunities to get active in small ways throughout your day. This could be by taking the stairs instead of the lift, going for a walk or dancing around the house doing housework.

Talk about it

Talking about your experience of anxiety can be very useful. This can often require us to challenge ourselves, particularly if we tend to get into the habit of responding with, 'I'm fine' even when we are not. If you are unsure how to open up this conversation to others, try to set yourself a challenge. For example, when someone greets you by asking 'how are you?', instead of politely replying 'I'm fine', let them know how you truly feel such as 'a bit on edge/tense if I'm being honest'. Notice how the other person reacts and invite them to share by asking them how they are. Most of us are not really feeling fine just now and it can help to share that.

Seek support

Local 1-1 wellbeing support is available for care home staff:

Call or text 07971 794065 to arrange support (This is a dedicated line staffed Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm, or leave a voicemail 24/7)

For immediate support 24/7:

National Wellbeing Hub -
<http://wellbeinghub.scot> - 0800 111 4191

NHS Lanarkshire Staff Care and Wellbeing
24-hour Helpline - 01698 752000