

Anxiety



If you are feeling very upset, suicidal or in need of emotional support you can phone NHS 24 on 111.



Everyone experiences feelings of anxiety. It is a normal reaction when in danger. Long-lasting anxiety can start when we do not feel in control.



A stressful event like having COVID or a stay in hospital can cause anxiety. This may be if you were in intensive care unit (ICU), which can be a very difficult experience. You may also have nightmares and/or flashbacks. In most cases these go away. They may continue for some people.



You may worry that you may catch COVID again. Or have to stay in hospital again. This can make you feel more anxious about the future. These feelings are normal and common.

Worries that people who have had COVID have include:



- fears about health and recovery
- stress about being off work and money
- worries about family and friends also getting ill.

Symptoms of anxiety



Anxiety affects people in different ways. These symptoms are part of the body's response to stress

You may experience:

- trouble sleeping
- difficulty concentrating and remembering things
- changes in mood
- flashbacks
- being out of breath or shallow breathing
- difficulty slowing your breathing down
- chest pain
- racing thoughts

For many people these symptoms will only last for short periods of time, for some people they may last longer and can start to affect their daily life.

Managing anxiety

If your anxiety symptoms are affecting your life, there are things you can do.



Relaxation

When people feel stressed or anxious, their bodies tense up. You may experience symptoms like headaches, shallow breathing, and dizziness.



Relaxation can help. You could try doing an activity you find relaxing like reading a book, having a bath, sitting outside, or having a short walk.



Mindfulness

After being unwell, people can worry. Sometimes people find it hard to focus on the now.



Mindfulness can help you to focus on the present moment. You step back from any worries.

Getting back to usual activities



When you have been through a difficult time, it is normal to stop doing things which feel too hard or unsafe. This can help you to cope with being unwell. But avoiding activities can also make them feel even more scary.



Getting back to normal activities may feel like too much. Breaking activities down into small steps can help them feel easier. You can then build this up slowly over time.

Positive self-talk



When you are having racing thoughts and worries, it can be helpful to try to take a step back and help yourself feel better. Try to notice what the worry or difficult thought is. You can then write it down and see if you can think of a better, kinder thought.

When to get help



Although feelings of anxiety can be normal, you should see your GP if it is affecting your daily life. For example, if anxiety stops you doing things that matter to you.



Your GP will ask you about your symptoms and your worries, fears and emotions and let you know what help might be available in your area.