

Anxiety

Definition

Merriam Webster defines anxiety as:

ANXIETY: 1 a: painful or apprehensive uneasiness of mind usually over an impending or anticipated ill; **b:** fearful concern or interest; **c:** a cause of anxiety; **2:** an abnormal and overwhelming sense of apprehension and fear often marked by physiological signs (as sweating, tension, and increased pulse), by doubt concerning the reality and nature of the threat, and by self-doubt about one's capacity to cope with it

Clinical Diagnosis

The American Psychiatric Association in the 4th edition of the Diagnostic & Statistical Manual (DSM-IV-TR) states the following criteria for **Generalized Anxiety Disorder**:

- A. Excessive anxiety and worry occurring in more days than not for at least 6 months, about a number of events or activities.
- B. The person finds it difficult to control the worry.
- C. The anxiety and worry are associated with three (or more) of the following six symptoms (with at least some symptoms present for more days than not for the past 6 months):
 - 1) restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
 - 2) being easily fatigued
 - 3) difficulty concentrating or mind going blank
 - 4) irritability
 - 5) muscle tension
 - 6) sleep disturbance (difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless unsatisfying sleep)
- D. The anxiety and worry is not about having a Panic Attack (as in Panic Disorder), being embarrassed in public (as in Social Phobia), being contaminated (as in OCD), being away from home or close relatives (as in Separation Anxiety Disorder), gaining weight (as in Anorexia Nervosa), having multiple physical complaints (as in Somatization Disorder), and the anxiety and worry do not occur exclusively during Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).
- E. The anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms cause clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.
- F. The disturbance is not due to the direct physiological effects of a substance (e.g., a drug of abuse, a medication) or a general medical condition (e.g., hyperthyroidism) and does not occur exclusively during a Mood Disorder, a Psychotic Disorder, or a Pervasive Developmental Disorder.

Anxiety and Cancer

Studies of individuals diagnosed with cancer have shown that a significant number experience a heightened level of anxiety with approximately 50% of cancer patients meeting the DSM criteria for a clinical diagnosis of generalized anxiety disorder.