

Screening for and Treating Anxiety Disorders

About 30% of people will experience an anxiety disorder in their lifetime.

- **Generalized anxiety disorder** (4-5%): chronic excessive worry in multiple areas of life
- **Social anxiety disorder** (4%): intense fear of judgment, rejection, or embarrassment
- **Panic attack** (13%): brief episode of sudden intense fear or discomfort
- **Panic disorder** (2%): recurrent panic attacks and avoidance/worry about future attacks
- **Specific phobia** (7%): fear of object or situation leading to avoidance

Anxiety disorders are often missed in primary care. They are **highly comorbid** with other medical and psychiatric conditions. Patients frequently present with **somatic symptoms**, such as headaches, GI distress, muscle tension, chest pain, and heart palpitations—these are part of a [cycle of anxiety](#).



The [GAD-2/7](#) is a validated **screening** tool for anxiety disorders. The GAD-7 can also be used to assess the severity of symptoms to help guide the choice of treatments. Repeating the GAD-7 can help evaluate if treatments are working.

For patients with anxiety, **you might recommend:**

- Deep breathing techniques, cued relaxation, or other self-calming activities
- Setting time limits on certain activities (e.g., news, social media)
- Engaging in meaningful activities and relationships
- Mental health apps (e.g., Calm, Headspace, UCLA Mindful)
- Light daily exercise
- Cognitive behavioral therapy
- SSRI/SNRI

Refer to our [Anxiety Screening and Management tool](#) for more info.