



Is it anxiety – or just stress?

Many people have used the word “anxiety” to simply mean they were worried or stressed about an event. But, are anxiety and stress really the same thing?

According to the National Institutes of Mental Health, anxiety can be a different - and serious – mental health illness that goes beyond just stress.

How do you know if it’s more than just daily stress? Here are some key differences:

- **Length of time:** The worry goes on for months without relief.
 - **Level of worry:** You regularly have attacks of intense fear and worry about when the next attack will happen. These episodes may make you feel out of control.
 - **Interferes with life:** People with anxiety may avoid social situations, have trouble at work, and feel self-conscious around other people.
 - **Physical symptoms:** Anxiety can make it difficult to sleep and may cause intense fatigue, sweating, trembling or nausea.
- If you’re worried that you have more than just typical stress, seek medical care. Many people with anxiety can get relief with their doctor’s help. Possible treatments include:
- **Talk therapy:** A mental health professional can talk with you about your anxiety and help you find ways to cope.
 - **Self-help and support groups:** Many people find that talking to others with anxiety (in person or online) is helpful.
 - **Stress management:** Avoiding caffeine, alcohol, and some medications can help improve anxiety symptoms. This is often used in combination with other treatment methods.
 - **Medicines:** Many medicines can treat anxiety, but they are not a “cure.” They can help calm symptoms of anxiety so a person can function in daily life.

Diagnosing anxiety isn’t always simple to do, but talking with a doctor about your symptoms is an important first step. From there, you can decide if treatment is needed.