



Coping with Anxiety

What is anxiety?

Everyone feels anxious at times—it's a normal reaction to stress. Dealing with anxiety is hard, but there are steps you can take to help you feel better. When overwhelming feelings of worry don't go away, or they make it hard to do your daily routine, you may have an anxiety disorder and need more support. We're here to help.

Anxiety disorders are very common

About **1** in **4** people in the United States will develop an anxiety disorder during their lifetime.

What are the symptoms?

You can have both physical and emotional symptoms of anxiety.

Physical symptoms:

- Being jittery
- Rapid heartbeat
- Muscle tension
- Feeling out of breath or tired
- Sweaty or cold hands
- Not able to sleep

Emotional symptoms:

- Fear
- Worry
- Tense/can't relax
- Easily irritable
- Thoughts that something bad will happen

Ways to care for yourself

There are steps you can take to help you reduce anxiety and feel better.



Reach out to people in your life for support during times of stress.



Tell yourself: “This isn’t an emergency. I’m not in danger. I can keep going, even though I feel anxious.”



Set aside 15 minutes to an hour each day to do all your worrying. Write down your fears in detail. When worries come to mind during other parts of the day, save them on a list for the next worry time.



Reduce or eliminate caffeine. Caffeine makes anxious feelings worse, and can make it hard to sleep.



Don’t use alcohol, drugs, or tobacco to cope with anxiety. Even a small amount can make you feel worse. Smoking can make you feel edgy.



Exercise. Try to get 30 minutes of physical activity at least 5 days a week. You don’t have to do it all at once. You can break up your activities throughout the day.



Practice deep breathing. Breathe through your nose counting to 4. Breathe deeply into your belly. Breathe out slowly through your nose counting to 6. Continue breathing deeply in this way for a few minutes.

Thinking about taking herbs?

Some herbs are known to treat anxiety, but can have serious side effects. Ask your doctor before using herbs, to see if they’re safe for you.

When to contact us

If anxiety keeps you from doing your daily activities, or is causing discomfort and self-care doesn’t help:

- Make an appointment with your doctor or call our Mental Health Department if you need additional support.
- Contact your Health Education Department for classes that teach skills to relieve anxiety.
- Search kp.org/mydoctor.

If you’re hit, hurt, or threatened by a partner or spouse, this can seriously affect your health, including your anxiety. There’s help. Call the National Domestic Violence Hotline at 1-800-799-7233 or connect to ndvh.org.

This information is not intended to diagnose health problems or to take the place of medical advice or care you receive from your physician or other health care professional. If you have persistent health problems, or if you have additional questions, please consult your doctor. Some photos may include models and not actual patients.

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