



Anxiety

Anxiety describes any feeling of worry or dread, usually about potential events that might happen. Some anxiety about stressful events is normal. However, in some people, anxiety interferes with the ability to function.

Severe anxiety usually lasts more than six months, though it may not be a problem every day. Physical symptoms can sometimes result, including fatigue, insomnia, and irritability. Some people who think they are anxious may actually be depressed. Because of all these factors, it is important for people who are anxious to seek expert medical care. Natural therapies can be one part of the approach to helping relieve mild to moderate anxiety.

It is my personal belief that **to permanently help** someone with anxiety, **it is necessary to discover the reason for the anxiety!** This can best be accomplished through hypnotherapy or counseling under hypnosis. Once the cause is uncovered, the goal is to help the individual understand the cause and then guide and support them as they formulate a plan to address and hopefully resolve the underlying problem which has caused them to be anxious.

All of the suggestions for help with anxiety listed below in oral form are short term "crutches" to get through a rough spot. None of them will resolve the anxiety permanently - they only mask the underlying cause by improving daily function as they help "adjust" the brains chemical machinery while they are taken regularly. Once they are stopped, the anxiety returns and may actually flare-up leading to a full blown panic attack!

Lifestyle changes

Reducing exposure to stressful situations can help decrease anxiety. In some cases meditation or biofeedback is helpful; hypnotherapy, counseling, or group therapy can greatly facilitate the treatment of anxiety.¹ Regular sleep schedules with undisturbed sleep times are vital to recharging the brain and helping a person deal with life's stressors.

Dietary changes

All sources of caffeine should be avoided, including coffee, tea, chocolate, caffeinated sodas, and caffeine-containing medications. People with high levels of anxiety appear to be more susceptible to the actions of caffeine.²

Hypnotherapy is a wonderful medium to discover the cause of your anxiety and remedy it - frequently allowing permanent resolution of anxiety. Does it not make sense to find and fix the underlying cause of your anxiety rather than to mask it with medications?? www.aamh.com.

Nutritional and Natural Therapies

- For mild anxiety, **magnesium** may be relaxing.³ Typically, 200–300 mg of magnesium are taken two to three times per day. Some doctors of natural medicine recommend soaking in a hot tub containing 1–2 cups of magnesium sulfate crystals (such as Epsom salts) for fifteen to twenty minutes, though support for this approach remains anecdotal. Taking too much magnesium often leads to diarrhea, so the initial dose should be started once daily and slowly increased. People with kidney disease should not take magnesium supplements without consulting a physician.
- **Phosphatidyl choline**, a component of **lecithin**, has been used to help people with anxiety who have panic attacks. Up to 4 grams three times per day has been reported to control such attacks in one double-blind trial.⁴
- **Vitamin B3 as niacinamide** (not niacin) may be beneficial. It has been shown in animals to work in the brain in ways similar to drugs, such as Valium, which are used to treat anxiety.⁵ One study found that niacinamide could help people get through withdrawal from Valium-type drugs—a common problem.⁶ A reasonable amount of niacinamide to take for anxiety, according to some doctors of natural medicine, is up to 500 mg four times per day.

Helpful Herbs

- The preeminent botanical remedy for anxiety is **kava**, an herb from the South Pacific. It has been extensively studied for this purpose.⁷ One 100 mg capsule standardized to 70% kava-lactone is given three times per day in many studies. Double-blind studies have validated the effectiveness of kava for people with anxiety,^{8 9} including menopausal women.¹⁰ Although kava is safer and rarely causes side effects at the given amount, it may cause problems if combined for more than a few days with benzodiazepines in some people.¹¹ A previous study found kava to be just as effective as benzodiazepines over the course of six weeks.¹² The latest research shows that use of kava for up to six months is safe and effective compared to placebo.¹³ In recommended amounts, the only reported side effects from kava use are mild gastrointestinal disturbances in some people. Long-term consumption of very high doses of kava may turn the skin yellow temporarily.
- **St. John's wort** is very popular for the treatment of mild depression. It has also been reported in at least one double-blind study to reduce anxiety.¹⁴ Like kava, a flavonoid compound from St. John's wort known as amentoflavone has been found to act in the central nervous system in a way similar to benzodiazepine drugs.¹⁵ St. John's has been reported to make the skin more sensitive to sunlight, but this is unlikely when used at recommended levels. However, fair-skinned individuals should be

- alert for this and use sun screening lotions liberally prior to sun exposure, or avoid sun exposure as much as possible. Taking St. John's wort in addition to a prescription antidepressant has not been studied. Likewise, stopping a prescription antidepressant to start SJW may cause side effects. Your physician should be consulted prior to any of these changes! While some research suggests St. John's wort is safe during pregnancy and lactation, safety studies are lacking.
- An old folk remedy for anxiety, particularly when it causes insomnia, is **chamomile tea**. There is evidence from test tube studies that chamomile contains compounds with a calming action.¹⁶ There are also animal studies that suggest a benefit of chamomile for anxiety.¹⁷ Often one cup of tea is taken three or more times per day. People sensitive to ragweed or asters should be cautious with chamomile as they are in the same "family" and may cause a cross-reaction leading to wheezing, sneezing, skin reactions, etc.
 - Several **other botanicals known as "nerve tonics"** are also used in traditional herbal medicine with anxious people. These have not been rigorously investigated by scientific means to confirm their efficacy, although they have a long track record of safety. These include **oats** (oat straw), **hops**, **passion flower**, and **valerian**. Used in the recommended amounts, passion flower is generally safe and has not been found to negatively interact with other sedative drugs; however, some experts suggest not using passion flower with MAO-inhibiting antidepressant drugs. Passion flower has not been proven to be safe during pregnancy and lactation. A German study has found the combination of valerian and passion flower to be useful for anxiety.¹⁸ Recent research indicates that valerian does not impair ability to drive or operate machinery. Valerian does not lead to addiction or dependence. There are no known contraindications to using valerian during pregnancy or lactation.

Traditional Medicine Offerings

- Many prescription **antidepressant medications** have been used successfully to help people deal with underlying anxiety disorders. **Imipramine**, an older antidepressant, has a good track record with good studies to support its use. It is reasonably priced as a generic. It can have side effects of dizziness, fatigue, dry mouth, weight gain, and constipation among others. The newer antidepressants in the **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI)** class have also been well studied and are very efficacious. These medications are expensive, but are generally well tolerated with a low side-effect profile. The most common ones are mild initial stomach upset, initial activation which can make underlying anxiety worse, loss of sex drive and ability to orgasm, and long term use weight gain.
- Prescription **anxiolytics** like **Buspar**, which is not addicting or habit forming, and benzodiazepines like **Ativan**, **Serax**, **Xanax**, **Klonopin** and

others which may be addicting or habit forming work wonderfully to control the acute symptoms of anxiety or panic. They are traditionally intended to be used only short term while other less habit-forming medications, like the SSRI antidepressants start to take effect!

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