



Is it possible to have both depression and anxiety at the same time? The answer is yes, many people with anxiety go through bouts of occasional depression as well.

Depression and Anxiety

Symptoms of depression and anxiety often co-occur in certain disorders. In fact, according to the National Institute of Mental Health, major depression often accompanies panic disorder and other anxiety disorders. While depression and anxiety have distinct clinical features, there is some overlap of symptoms. For example, in both depression and anxiety, irritability, decreased concentration, and impaired sleep are common.

It is not uncommon to experience occasional and brief periods of feeling down and anxious. These episodes are not usually a cause for concern, and once passed, you are able to resume life as usual. But, if you suffer from depression and anxiety and your symptoms are present for more than two weeks, or are interfering with how you live your life, it's time to get help.

Depression

We've all felt "sad" or "blue" at one time or another. Rare bouts of depression that last only a few days are usually not a problem for most people. But, clinical depression—the type that people seek help for—is a different story. Major depressive episodes are characterized by extreme symptoms that interfere with daily functioning.

Clinical depression, or a major depressive episode, can include any of the following symptoms:

- feeling sad most of the time
- feeling tired or having low energy most of the day
- loss of interest in activities once enjoyed
- changes in appetite, weight loss or gain
- trouble concentrating and headaches
- difficulty sleeping
- feeling worthless
- feeling helpless or hopeless
- stomach problems or muscular/skeletal pain
- thoughts of death or suicide

Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal human experience. In fact, it is considered a beneficial response in certain situations. For example, dangerous situations trigger anxiety in the form of a fight-or-flight stress response that is necessary for our survival. Or, sometimes anxiety gives us the necessary push we need to get things done.

While it's pretty clear that anxiety is normal and even beneficial, for some people it becomes a problem. And, when anxiety becomes a problem, the effects can be physical, emotional and behavioral. Your symptoms may lead to an anxiety disorder if they are:

- severe or last a long time
- out of proportion to the situation at hand
- causing extreme behaviors (i.e., avoidance) to reduce the anxiety

Treatment

Symptoms of depression and anxiety are treatable. Studies show that medications and/or psychotherapy (talk therapy) are effective for most individuals.

As the name implies, antidepressants are used for the treatment of depression. It is now clear that in addition to improving one's mood, antidepressants also have an anti-anxiety effect. Antidepressants are believed to affect certain (chemical messengers) in the brain, resulting in a better mood and less anxiety. Today, antidepressants are the usual choice of medication intervention for major depressive disorders and anxiety disorders.

Cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) is one form of psychotherapy that has been shown to be successful in treating depression and anxiety disorders. CBT combines the fundamental concepts of behavioral therapy and cognitive therapy. The term "cognitive" refers to our thought process and reflects what we think, believe, and perceive. Put together, CBT focuses on our behaviors and thoughts and how they are contributing to our current symptoms and difficulties.

