CENTRAL LOUISIANA Medical Psychology Clinic

ANXIETY DISORDERS

What is Anxiety

Anxiety is a normal response to stress and perceived threat. In adulthood, anxiety often develops when the brain remains in a heightened state of alert due to ongoing responsibilities, uncertainty, trauma, or high internal expectations. While anxiety can be motivating in short bursts, chronic anxiety can interfere with emotional well-being, relationships, and daily functioning. Fear is a normal, natural, and healthy response to some situations, anxiety can be conceptualized as a danger-detection system gone awry.

How Anxiety Presents

Anxiety in adults may go unrecognized, as many individuals normalize their symptoms, attribute them to personality traits, or continue functioning despite high distress. Adults may minimize anxiety until it begins to interfere with health, relationships, or work performance. Things to look out for are:

- Persistent worry that feels difficult to control
- Physical symptoms (muscle tension, GI distress, headaches, fatigue)
- Avoidance of work tasks, social situations, or decision-making
- Difficulty sleeping or racing thoughts at night
- Perfectionism or fear of failure
- Irritability or emotional overwhelm
- Panic attacks or fear of losing control
- Over-preparing, reassurance seeking, or procrastination
- Difficulty relaxing or feeling “on edge”

Types of Anxiety Disorders

Individuals can struggle with several different types of anxiety, including but not limited to:

- Social Anxiety
  - Intense fear of social or performance situations that may involve embarrassment
- Generalized Anxiety
  - Persistent, excessive worry about various aspects of life
- Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder
  - Repeated unwanted thoughts that cause distress can trigger compulsions to make things “feel right”
- Panic Disorder
  - Recurrent panic attacks with no known trigger, intense worry about future panic attacks
- Specific Phobias
  - Predictable negative response to otherwise neutral stimuli

How Can CLMPC Help?

CLMPC offers comprehensive, evidence-based treatment for adults experiencing anxiety. Treatment plans are individualized and may include psychotherapy, medication management, or a combination of both.

Assessment

Assessment for adult anxiety includes a comprehensive clinical interview, self-report measures, and exploration of medical history, stressors, coping patterns, and functional impact. Collaboration with medical providers may be recommended when physical symptoms are present

Medication Management

The doctors at CLMPC will work with you to develop an effective and appropriate psychopharmacologic protocol for the treatment of your anxiety. This often includes a combination of long-acting stabilizing medications to calm your body overall and short-acting medications to take as needed when anxiety is high.

Psychotherapies for Anxiety

Psychotherapy is often the frontline and preferred treatment for anxiety disorders. While medication can be extremely helpful, psychotherapy targets the root of anxiety creating long-lasting change and developing coping skills that will last a lifetime. Your provider at CLMPC will work with you to choose the best treatment based on your symptoms and diagnosis. This may include:

- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy
  - Aimed at identifying and challenging anxious thoughts that are causing anxious behaviors and feelings
  - Helps adults identify and challenge unhelpful thinking patterns, reduce avoidance, and build more adaptive coping strategies
- Exposure Response Prevention
  - Aimed at reducing fear by exposing the individual to fear-inducing stimuli and demonstrating that they can and will be able to tolerate exposure
  - Helps develop tolerance for uncertainty and reduce safety behaviors
- Mindfulness and Relaxation-Based Interventions
  - Used in conjunction with other treatments, helps individuals learn to notice and manage anxiety in their body and increase nervous system regulation.
- Family-Based Interventions
  - Occasionally used in conjunction with other treatment methods to increase accountability and treatment effectiveness.
  - Can take many forms, such as couples therapy, supportive partner involvement, as well as boundary and communication work