

Are you just a worrywart or is it something more?

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(HealthDay)—Everyone goes through moments of worry, but for some

people, anxiety takes over their lives. How can you tell if you're an average worrywart or if you might have an anxiety disorder? Your degree of distress is often a good indicator.

Normal anxiety typically comes from a specific source of stress, like an upcoming job interview or a fight with your spouse. When the issue is resolved, the anxiety usually eases. With an anxiety disorder, you could be anxious all of the time and worry about everything from money to sexual performance to the well-being of loved ones, often for no good reason.

Putting a Name to Your Feelings

- Excessive worrying is a sign of what's called "generalized anxiety disorder."
- Sudden episodes of anxiety, distress or discomfort that may be accompanied by troubling physical symptoms, like a [rapid heart rate](#), can be signs of a "panic disorder."
- Anxiety over something specific—like the fear of flying, heights, small spaces or spiders—are all very common "phobias."

One sign of a problem is the intensity of your distress—if your anxiety is out of proportion with the problem when a real problem exists.

The amount of time you spend worrying is also a clue. A study of people's worry diaries found that those with an anxiety disorder worried for more than five hours a day— five times more than the average person. You might have [physical symptoms](#), such as dizziness, sweating, a racing heart and the feeling that you can't breathe. Some people find it hard to concentrate or sleep, or wrestle with stomach aches or headaches.

Normal worrying doesn't interfere with living your life. But an [anxiety](#) disorder can keep you from handling family and work responsibilities. If

you're concerned, talk to your doctor. Treatments from meditation to talk therapy can help.

More information: The U.S. National Institute of Mental Health has more on [anxiety disorders](#) and how to recognize them.

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