

Signs and symptoms of anxiety in older people

The symptoms of **anxiety** in older people are sometimes not all that obvious as they often develop gradually and, given that we all experience some anxiety at some points in time, it can be hard to know how much is too much. Often older people with anxiety will experience a range of symptoms from the categories below:

Behavioral

- Avoiding objects or situations which cause anxiety
- Urges to perform certain rituals in a bid to relieve anxiety
- Not being assertive (i.e. avoiding eye contact)
- Difficulty making decisions
- Being startled easily

Feelings

- Overwhelmed
- Fear (particularly when facing certain objects, situations or events)
- Worried about physical symptoms (such as fearing there is an undiagnosed medical problem)
- Dread (such as fearing that something bad is going to happen)
- Constantly tense or nervous
- Uncontrollable or overwhelming panic

Thoughts

- “I’m going crazy.”
- “I can’t control myself.”
- “I’m about to die.”
- “People are judging me.”
- Having upsetting dreams or flashbacks of a traumatic event
- Finding it hard to stop worrying, unwanted or intrusive thoughts

Physical symptoms

- Increased heart rate/ racing heart
- Vomiting, nausea or pain in the stomach
- Muscle tension and pain
- Feeling detached from your physical self or surroundings
- Having trouble sleeping
- Sweating, shaking
- Dizzy, lightheaded or faint
- Numbness or tingling
- Hot or cold flushes