

Got Anxiety?

(NAPSA)—College can be nerve-wracking—the unfamiliarity of the new surroundings, the pressure to make friends and the stress of exams contribute to some anxiety in almost everyone. But for some, persistent, irrational and overwhelming anxiety can make ordinary activities difficult or even impossible. These people may have an anxiety disorder, a condition that affects nearly one in 14 students.

Anxiety disorders affect over 40 million American adults—18 percent of the population—and twice as many women as men. While a stressful event such as a final exam, rejection from a sports team, or a first date can cause anxiety in anyone, individuals suffering from an anxiety disorder experience chronic, intense and uncontrollable anxiety that gets in the way of normal, everyday living.

While anxiety disorders can occur at any age, they often surface in a person's teens or twenties. In fact, nearly 75 percent of people who suffer from an anxiety disorder will have their first episode by age 21.5. Here are some symptoms of an anxiety disorder:

- Persistent, excessive and unrealistic worry about everyday things that interferes with classes, work, social life and/or family relationships and obligations;

- An intense fear of being judged by others in social situations, even seemingly nonthreatening ones such as ordering food in a restaurant or making a phone call, that leads to avoidance of the situation;

- Spontaneous, seemingly out-of-the-blue panic attacks that fill you with terror and a preoccupation with the fear of having another panic attack;

- Strong, irrational reaction to a particular object, place or situation that results in avoiding common, everyday situations; e.g., elevators, bridges;

- Unwanted and intrusive thoughts that you can't seem to get out of your head and rituals that you feel you need to perform, such as washing your hands or checking things over and over;

- Ongoing and recurring nightmares, flashbacks or emotional numbing relating to a traumatic event that occurred several months or years ago.

Treatment options for anxiety disorders may include cognitive-behavioral therapy (a type of talk therapy), medication, relaxation techniques and self-help groups. Many schools offer treatment services to enrolled students at no charge. Others will provide referrals to local professionals. Students should check with their campus' counseling services or health center to find which services are available to them.

"Treatment works," says Jerilyn Ross, MA, LICSW, President & CEO of the Anxiety Disorders Association of America. "Suffering from an anxiety disorder during the critical college years and denying yourself treatment could have repercussions that might shape the rest of your life: a higher risk of alcohol and drug abuse, interruptions in completing school or dropping out completely, and, coupled with depression, a higher rate of suicide. That's why it's so important to seek help for these highly treatable disorders."

For more information on anxiety disorders and to take a self-test, visit www.gotanxiety.org.



Anxiety disorders are real and can be quite serious. The good news, however, is that they are treatable.