

Mental Health Carers Service Information & Advice Sheets

Anxiety & Phobias

Anxiety disorders are quite common, affecting about 5% of the population at any one time, but many people do not seek help. Anxiety and fear are normal human emotions and are often found as reactions to stress. However, normal anxiety becomes abnormal when the symptoms are so intense that people are stopped from coping well with day-to-day activities because they are so painful and distressing. Abnormal fears, sometimes called phobias, are intense fears of things that would not make the average person frightened.

Treatment

Talking about the problem to trusted friends and relatives often helps and may give a sense of perspective. However, more intensive talking treatments may be required such as Cognitive Behaviour Therapy [CBT]. This helps people to recognise, understand and manage anxiety. Learning to relax with advice from professionals or by using tape cassettes or books can help to bring tensions and anxieties under control. Medication such as tranquillisers or anti-depressants may be used to help ease anxiety during the day or help sleep at night.