



The Facts About Phobias

The three main types of Phobias include:

- Specific Phobias
- Social Phobia, or Social Anxiety Disorder
- Agoraphobia

Specific Phobia

- Specific Phobia affects 19.2 million American adults and women are twice as likely to suffer from it than men.
- Specific Phobia may begin in childhood and is often brought on by a traumatic event. Phobias that begin in youth may disappear as the individual gets older.
- Specific Phobia is characterized by an irrational involuntary fear reaction that is inappropriate to the situation and generally leads to avoidance of everyday objects, situations, or places. The sufferer recognizes that this fear is irrational, but is unable to control it. People can avoid or endure exposure to these common objects, places, or situations with significant stress, which can disturb daily activity, work, or social life. Common Specific Phobias include: heights; bridges; tunnels; animals; insects; highway driving; and subways.

Social Anxiety Disorder

- Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD) affects 15.3 million American adults and affects women and men equally.
- The onset of SAD usually occurs in mid to late adolescence. Children with SAD are prone to excessive shyness, tantrums, and even mutism. There is usually a marked decline in school performance and the child will often avoid going to school or taking part in age appropriate social activities. Their fears are centered on peer-related activities rather than activities involving adults, with whom they may feel more comfortable.

- SAD is characterized by an intense fear and anxiety about being judged by others or behaving in a way that may cause embarrassment or ridicule in a social or performance situation. People who suffer from this disorder are constantly aware of their physical signs of anxiety and worry that others will notice. This anxiety may result in fearful anticipation of an event, a panic attack, or avoidance of such an event. Some common fears associated with SAD are: speaking in public or to strangers; meeting new people; or the performance of common tasks in public, such as eating or writing.

- Symptoms of SAD can include:

- Palpitations or tremors
- Sweating or blushing
- Diarrhea
- Panic attacks
- Sensitivity to criticism and rejection resulting in low self-esteem

Agoraphobia

- Agoraphobia affects about one third of people with panic disorder.
- People with agoraphobia usually avoid certain situations or places for fear of experiencing a panic attack. This behavior often results after someone has had a panic attack in a setting where escape seems impossible, difficult or embarrassing, and immediate help may not be available; for example, while driving, sitting in a theater, or shopping in a grocery store or mall. In the most severe cases, the person's "safety zone" gradually narrows and the pattern of avoidance and level of anxiety about having another panic attack may reach the point where the individual becomes unable to leave the house.