

Social Anxiety Disorder (Social Phobia) Fact Sheet

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD), sometimes called social phobia, is a persistent fear of social situations where one may be embarrassed, judged, or scrutinized. It affects daily life, relationships, and work or school performance but is highly treatable.

Common Symptoms

- Intense fear or anxiety about social situations (e.g., parties, meetings, speaking up in class).
- Worry about being judged, embarrassed, or rejected.
- Avoidance of social or performance situations or enduring them with great distress.
- Physical symptoms such as rapid heartbeat, sweating, trembling, blushing, nausea, or shaky voice.
- Excessive anticipatory anxiety—worrying for days or weeks before an event.
- Low self-esteem and harsh self-criticism after social interactions.

Evidence-Based Treatments

- Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT) – focuses on identifying feared thoughts, gradual exposure, and social-skills practice.
- Selective Serotonin Re-uptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)/Serotonin-Norepinephrine Re-uptake Inhibitor (SNRI)
- Internet-based CBT (iCBT) – self-paced or therapist-guided online programs that mirror live CBT and expand access to care.
- Virtual-Reality Exposure Therapy (VRET) – uses VR headsets to safely practice feared social situations before real-world exposure.
- Mindfulness-Based or Acceptance & Commitment Therapy – helps reduce self-focused attention and increase psychological flexibility.

Useful Links for More Information

- [National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)
- [Anxiety & Depression Association of America \(ADAA\)](#)
- [Mayo Clinic – Social Anxiety Disorder Overview](#)
- [National Alliance on Mental Illness \(NAMI\)](#)

Disclaimer

This fact sheet is for educational purposes only and is not a substitute for professional diagnosis or treatment. If you believe you may have Social Anxiety Disorder or another mental-health condition, consult a qualified healthcare provider. If you are in crisis or thinking about harming yourself, in the United States call or text 988 (Suicide & Crisis Lifeline) or dial 911 in an emergency.



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