



# SOCIAL ANXIETY

## **What is Social Anxiety?**

Social Anxiety can be described as an intense fear of or anxiety about one or more social situations in which the person is exposed to possible negative evaluation by others. While many people can get nervous in new social situations, the fear experienced by those with Social Anxiety is usually out of proportion with the threat that is actually posed by the situation. Social Anxiety can be debilitating when it interferes with the individual's daily activities, as their fear may cause them to avoid social situations all together. In addition, 50% of individuals with Social Anxiety may experience panic attacks when facing an anxiety provoking social situation. Physical symptoms include: rapid heartbeat, sweating, tightness in chest, headaches, and heavy breathing.

## **Who can have Social Anxiety?**

Social Anxiety is typically experienced for the first time in childhood or adolescence, with women twice as likely as men to develop the disorder. Psychological, biological, as well as environmental factors can all come into play when it comes to the development of Social Anxiety.

## **Should I be concerned?**

If you know someone who is experiencing Social Anxiety, with symptoms that are affecting their ability to cope with daily activities, support is likely needed. Social Anxiety tends to have a chronic course, and individuals with Social Anxiety are also at a higher risk of developing Generalized Anxiety Disorder and Depression, so it is important that they are able to receive support as early as possible.



# SOCIAL ANXIETY

## How can I help?

Support your loved one by having a conversation with them about the situations that make them anxious. Be open to talking about mental health and be patient if they are not up to going somewhere with you. Ask them what you can do to make them feel more comfortable in situations that give them anxiety. If the person is prone to panic attacks, ask what type of support they would appreciate during an attack. It is important to know that many people with Social Anxiety do not seek treatment on their own, so your support will be greatly needed. You may also direct them to community and/or online resources for further support.

## Resources

- <http://www.amhs-kfla.ca>
- TALK (Listening Support – Kingston) 613-544-1771
- <https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>
- <https://cmha.ca/mental-health/understanding-mental-illness/anxiety-disorders>
- [http://www.camhx.ca/education/online\\_courses\\_webinars/mha101/anxietydisorder/Anxiety\\_Disorders\\_.htm](http://www.camhx.ca/education/online_courses_webinars/mha101/anxietydisorder/Anxiety_Disorders_.htm)