

## Chapter 8. An overview on Anxiety

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### Abstract

Anxiety disorders are among the most common psychiatric illnesses worldwide. They involve excessive, uncontrollable fear and worry that disrupt normal life. Neurobiological factors such as imbalances in serotonin, gamma-aminobutyric acid (GABA), and noradrenergic systems contribute to these conditions. Environmental triggers and stress also play major roles. This chapter summarizes the definition, classification, causes, pathophysiology, diagnosis, and treatment—including modern pharmacotherapy and behavioral therapy—of anxiety disorders. Emphasis is placed on simplified academic understanding suitable for pharmacy and health-science students.

### Introduction

Anxiety is a universal human emotion that prepares the body to face danger or stress. When anxiety becomes exaggerated or persists without an appropriate cause, it is classified as an anxiety disorder. These disorders affect thought, behavior, and physical health. They can occur independently or with other psychiatric and medical conditions such as depression, hypertension, or thyroid disorders. Anxiety disorders represent a significant public-health problem. According to the World Health Organization, over 250 million people worldwide experience disabling anxiety symptoms at some point in their lives. Chronic anxiety reduces productivity, impairs social relationships, and increases health-care costs.

The development of anxiety involves complex interactions between genetic predisposition, neurochemical imbalance, environmental stressors, and learned behavioral responses. Advances in neuroimaging and pharmacology have improved understanding and treatment of these disorders. Pharmacists and clinicians play a vital role in guiding therapy, ensuring adherence, and minimizing side effects.

### Definition

Anxiety disorder refers to a group of mental-health conditions characterized by excessive fear, apprehension, or worry accompanied by physiological symptoms such as palpitations, sweating, trembling, and restlessness.

The anxiety experienced is disproportionate to the situation and interferes with daily functioning.

### Classification of Anxiety Disorders

According to the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), the main types are:

#### Type of Disorder

##### 1. Generalized Anxiety Disorder

(GAD) Persistent, excessive worry about various aspects of life such as work or health for  $\geq 6$  months.