

Does this sound like you?

- You feel overwhelmed when you have to take tests
- Before taking a test, you feel certain that you will do poorly on it
- You experience physical concerns before or during a test such as headaches, upset stomach, rapid heart rate, shakiness, or shortness of breath
- You sometimes “blank out” about information that you previously knew while taking a test
- The grade you receive on a test often does not reflect your preparation for the test
- Your anxiety about a test increases as others talk about the test or as you do last-minute cramming
- You place a lot of importance on doing well on tests

What is test anxiety?

Some anxiety and apprehension before and during a test is normal and can help you perform your best. Too much anxiety about a test, however, can impair your performance, cause your mind to go blank, and make you forget information that you previously knew. If you are anxious because you haven't prepared well enough for a test, real test anxiety is not the problem. If you have adequately prepared for the test and are still anxious, you may be experiencing test anxiety.

How are people affected by test anxiety?

Test anxiety affects individuals in different ways, but it typically involves physical, emotional, and cognitive components. Physically, individuals may have an increased heart rate, shortness of breath, shakiness, or an upset stomach. Emotionally, individuals may feel panic, fear and helplessness. Cognitively, individuals may have thoughts of failure and difficulties with concentration and memory.

How can test anxiety be handled?

- Be sure you have prepared adequately for the test
- Get a good night's sleep and eat well before the test
- Don't place too much importance on the test
- Remember that it is just a test
- Use relaxation techniques such as deep breathing and tensing and relaxing different muscle groups
- Replace negative thoughts with positive ones
- Improve your study habits
- Don't panic if others finish the test before you
- Don't compare your academic performance to that of others

Can a counselor help me?

Sometimes test anxiety can seem overwhelming. If that is how you feel, don't hesitate to seek help. A counselor can talk to you about your concerns and will try to help you find solutions and ways to manage your anxiety.