

Does this sound like you?

- I have an intense fear that I will do or say something to embarrass myself in front of other people
- I am very afraid of making a mistake and being watched and judged by other people
- My fear of embarrassment makes me avoid doing things I want to do or speaking to people
- I worry for days or weeks before I have to meet new people
- I blush, sweat a lot, tremble, or feel like I have to throw up before and during an event where I am with new people
- I usually stay away from social situations such as school events and making speeches

What is social phobia?

Social phobia is a real illness. It can be treated with medication and therapy.

If you have social phobia, you are very worried about embarrassing yourself in front of others. Your fears may be so serious that you cannot do everyday things. You may have a hard time talking to people at work or school. Your fear may keep you from going to work or school on some days.

You may worry that you will blush and shake in front of others. You may feel that people are watching you, waiting for you to make a mistake. Talking on the phone, signing a check at the store, or using a public restroom can make you afraid.

Many people are a little nervous before they meet new people or give a speech. If you have social phobia, you may worry for weeks in advance. You may do anything to stay away from the situation.

When does social phobia start and how long does it last?

Social phobia usually starts in childhood or adolescence. It is rare for it to start after a person reaches their mid-twenties. Anyone can have social phobia, but more women than men have the illness. It sometimes runs in families. Without treatment, social phobia can last for many years or even a lifetime.

Am I the only one with this illness?

No. You are not alone. In any year, at least 5.3 million Americans have social phobia.

How can I help myself?

Talk to a counselor or a doctor about your fears and worries. Tell them if your worries keep you from doing everyday things and living your life.

How can a doctor or counselor help me?

Talking to a counselor helps many people with social phobia. Therapy can help you become more comfortable in social situations.

A doctor may give you medication to help you feel less anxious and afraid. It may take a few weeks for the medication to work.