

# Holidays can intensify common anxiety disorders

It's normal to worry from time to time, and everyone does it. However, one in every four Americans suffers from some form of anxiety disorder at one point or another in their lives. For these people, their excessive worry can dramatically affect quality of life. This is especially so during the holidays, when added stresses can trigger an increase in panic attacks or acute social anxiety.

Mental health specialists with the University of Michigan Health System encourage all of us to slow down and enjoy the holiday season, and for those individuals suffering from anxiety disorders to seek professional help. But how can people tell when their state of high anxiety is such that they need professional help?

According to Joseph Himle, associate director of the U-M Anxiety Disorders Program, anxiety of a clinical nature hinges on how much it interferes with activities of everyday life. Anxiety disorders people commonly seek treatment for fall into several groups: generalized anxiety disorder; panic disorder; and social anxiety disorder.

**Generalized Anxiety Disorder**  
We all experience worry, but usually we're able to control it. People with generalized anxiety disorder have difficulty controlling their worry. Also, the disorder comes with other problems or symptoms, such as difficulty sleeping, feeling tense, keyed up or on edge, or having problems with concentration or irritability.

**Panic Disorder**  
This is a condition characterized by sudden, unexpected surges of very intense anxiety and fear. Often when people experience a panic attack, they have several physical symptoms that just don't make sense for the situation they're in. These symptoms can include rapid heart rate, difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, chest pain or discomfort, shakiness, sweating, dizziness, even a feeling that things don't seem quite real. Panic attacks commonly last just a few minutes, coming on suddenly and going away quickly.

Around a third of the population will experience an attack of anxiety at some point that makes no sense. Most of us would dismiss it and carry on with our life, probably never to have another episode again. People with an actual panic disorder have a different reaction, however. They often characterize the experience as terrifying or something to be afraid of.

"When the panic attacks increase in frequency and begin to interfere with a person's life, that signals panic disorder, a condition that often requires treatment," says Himle, who is also a clinical assistant professor in the U-M Medical School's Department of Psychiatry.

**Social Anxiety Disorder**  
Social phobias are a common anxiety disorder. They affect approximately 13 percent of the population at some point in their lives, affecting women only slightly more than men. For people with this disorder, the impact on their lives can be significant.

"Social anxiety is really centered around a fear that people are evaluating you in a negative way or judging you in an unflattering way," Himle explains.

This anxiety disorder can interfere with a person's social life, including interfering with the ability to make friends, making one feel anxious around other people, and yearning to be alone. People with this disorder may find that interacting with someone on a date is so stressful that they prefer staying alone. Others may choose a partner who is less threatening.

Many people with social anxiety disorder find themselves isolated, depressed and feel the disorder has made a substantial impact on their well-being.

## CHALLENGE

For people with anxiety disorders, the holiday season is often a challenge. For instance, people with social anxiety may find it very difficult to attend office parties or neighborhood get-togethers. For someone

## ABOUT ANXIETY DISORDERS

- Anxiety disorders only infrequently occur in an isolated form. They are extensively present with depression and substance abuse.
  - Anxiety disorders cannot be "cured" but full functional recovery is achievable.
  - People with anxiety disorders tend to be at a continuous risk of relapse.
- For more information, visit the following Web sites:
- U-M Health Anxiety Disorders Program [www.med.umich.edu/psych/anxiety/disorders/index.html](http://www.med.umich.edu/psych/anxiety/disorders/index.html)
  - U-M Useful Links on Anxiety Disorders [www.med.umich.edu/psych/anxiety/links.html](http://www.med.umich.edu/psych/anxiety/links.html)
  - Anxiety Disorders Association of America [www.adaa.org/public/index.cfm](http://www.adaa.org/public/index.cfm)
  - NIMH: General Anxiety Disorder [www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/gadmenu.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/gadmenu.cfm)
  - NIMH: Social Phobia [www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/socialphobiadmenu.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/socialphobiadmenu.cfm)
  - NIMH: Understanding Panic Disorder [www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/panicmenu.cfm](http://www.nimh.nih.gov/anxiety/panicmenu.cfm)

with a panic disorder, the hectic pace of the holidays can raise levels of general anxiety to the point where it triggers more attacks of anxiety. And people with panic disorders are sometimes challenged over the holidays to go places and do things like shopping or visiting.

"I think a gift we can all give ourselves during the holiday season is to take a little more time for rest, relaxation, satisfaction and to use this time to

think about getting help if social anxiety, panic disorder or generalized anxiety are interfering with life," Himle says. "We have treatments that are available for these conditions, and using the holidays to reflect and redirect our life in a more positive direction clearly makes sense."

There are two main interventions for people with anxiety disorders, and these include medications and psychothera-

py. The psychotherapies often center around something called cognitive behavioral therapy, which involves asking people to

confront their difficult situations. People in therapy also learn ways to manage their anxiety by using relaxation techniques. Lifestyle changes can also help; these include exercise, sleeping at regular times or even finding a better balance between work and fun.

"Medications and psychological treatments can be quite helpful for these problems, and there's real reason to come forward for help," says Himle. Cognitive therapists help people think more accurately about their situation and learn to judge risks more clearly.

"The fact of the matter is that most of the time, the things we worry about don't happen; a cognitive therapist helps people think more clearly and helps them gain their perspective about the real risks in life," he says.

**TAX PROBLEMS?**  
Never Talk to The IRS.  
Talk to Tax Resolution Specialists of Michigan.  
We Can Help!  
• Offer in Compromise • Remove Liens/Leaves  
• Penalty Abatement • Audit Representation  
• File Old Returns • Innocent Spouse Relief  
• Installment Payments • Payroll/Sales Relief

Call (248) 985-HELP (4357) for a FREE consultation, or call our recorded information line Toll Free: (866) TRS-4TAX (877-4829)

Member of America's Society of Tax Professionals  
**Tax Resolution Specialists of Michigan**  
Farmington Hills

**Constant Companion LLC**  
Comprehensive, Compassionate, In-Home Caregiving  
Do you know someone who needs reliable, compassionate care at home?  
Constant Companion Care is a private, bonded and insured Home Care Company dedicated to providing compassionate live-in, 24-hour or hourly support for those in need. Please contact the office at 248.539.5586

for a FREE RN consultation. We look forward to helping you and your family!  
29226 Orchard Lake Road, Suite 50  
Farmington Hills, MI 48334  
248.539.5586

**★ Holiday Stars Shine! ★**

Holiday spirits rise with the sweet sounds of the dulcimer, the nostalgic choruses of Barbershop and Dickens, as the Mall echoes with live entertainment each day throughout the holidays

**December Entertainment**

1 • Sun.	1:00 p.m.	Harmony - Vocal Duo
	3:00 p.m.	Dalliance Folk Ensemble
2 • Mon.	7:00 p.m.	Schoolcraft College Jazz Band
4 • Wed.	7:00 p.m.	Translucence Barbershop Quartet
5 • Thurs.	2:00 p.m.	Charlene Berry Dulcimer
6 • Fri.	7:00 p.m.	Livonia Civic Chorus
7 • Sat.	12:00 p.m.	Dickens Carolers
	2:00 p.m.	Renaissance Barbershop Chorus
8 • Sun.	2:00 p.m.	Norma Atwood Rising Stars Singers
9 • Mon.	7:00 p.m.	Gary Cooper Variety Instrumental
10 • Tues.	7:00 p.m.	Gary Cooper Variety Instrumental
11 • Wed.	1:30 p.m.	Claremont High School Choir
13 • Fri.	2:00 p.m.	Farmington High School Orchestra
	6:00 p.m.	Detroit Fine & Performing Arts, Band & Orchestra
14 • Sat.	12:00 p.m.	Dance Extreme
	3:00 p.m.	Silver Strings Dulcimer
15 • Sun.	2:00 p.m.	Cheryl Roullet Gospel Inspirations
16 • Mon.	11:30 a.m.	Ladywood High School Women's Choir
17 • Tues.	11:30 a.m.	Ladywood High School Women's Choir
18 • Wed.	2:00 p.m.	Joseph Berko, Pianist
	7:00 p.m.	goFours Barbershop Quartet
19 • Thurs.	10:00 a.m.	Power Middle School Band
	1:30 p.m.	Claremont Middle School Choir
20 • Fri.	11:30 p.m.	Claremont High School Orchestra
21 • Sat.	7:00 p.m.	William Harrison, Pianist
21 • Sat.	2:00 p.m.	Renaissance Barbershop Chorus
22 • Sun.	1:00 p.m.	Harmony - Vocal Duo

**LIVONIA**  
Seven Mile & Middlebelt Roads • 248-476-1160

[www.800wesleys.com](http://www.800wesleys.com)  
**2 Dozen Roses '29'**  
**Wesley Berry Flowers**  
WE DELIVER across the street or across the nation!  
**1-800-WESLEYS**  
6677 Orchard Lake Road  
Just South of Apple in West Bloomfield  
\* CASH & CARRY PRICE  
BOX & DELIVERY EXTRA

**Bloomfield Plaza**  
A Distinguished Collection of Shops and Services  
Telegraph at Maple  
**OPEN SUNDAYS 12 P.M.-5 P.M.**  
For Your Convenience During the Holiday Season

**"NEW YEAR'S EVE IS A FAMILY AFFAIR AT THE DOUBLE TREE HOTEL-NOVI"**

• Your entire family will enjoy this special package which includes:  
• Warm Chocolate Chip Cookies at check-in  
• Party favors for 4 guests  
• One large pizza and 1 pitcher of soda  
• Family friendly movies shown in our amphitheater  
• Indoor pool, sauna, game room  
• Breakfast on New Year's Day for 4 guests in the Oaks Grille  
• A comfortable sleeping room all for \$159.00 (inclusive of tax).  
• For more information, call us at (800) 713-3513.

Home of the Whole Nine Yards Sports Bar

**DOUBLE TREE HOTEL**  
27000 SHERATON DR. • NOVI, MI 48377  
800-713-3513  
HOTEL  
Sweet Dreams

Rates in per room, per night, based on double occupancy. Rates are subject to change without notice. Not applicable to groups. Subject to availability. Additional restrictions may apply. ©1998 Phoenix Hotel Corporation. www.doubletreehotels.com

**SPOTLIGHT ON:**  
**Orthodontics**  
by Josephine Finazzo, D.M.D.  
**A GRINDING HALT**  
Bruxism, the medical term for the grinding of teeth or the clenching of jaws, is common among young children. In fact, three out of every ten children will grind or clench. In most cases, the culprit is thought to be stress, usually around bedtime or after. On the other hand, in some cases bruxism is related to a child's growth and development. Some children grind their teeth because the top and bottom teeth are not properly aligned. As a result, in some extreme circumstances, nighttime grinding and clenching can wear down tooth enamel, chip teeth, increase temperature and cause severe facial pain.

and few problems. If so, proper diagnosis and orthodontic treatment may help. Bruxism can also occur in adults. If you would like to speak to a professional about your teeth, contact TIE Orthodontic Group, 442-8885, and our staff will make an appointment for you. We can explain orthodontic equipment such as the Twin Block, the Mara bite advancer, the palatal expander, and the retainer. Located at 19850 Middlebelt, we will be happy to help you achieve a better, healthier smile! Payment plans and terms are available. Look for our next article in two weeks.

**THE ORTHODONTIC GROUP**  
19850 Middlebelt • Livonia • (248) 442-8885

**Is Dryness A Problem In Your Home?**

You need an Aprilaire® Humidifier.  
• Eliminate parched, dry air in your entire home or condo  
• Enjoy better indoor air quality  
• Safe, flow-thru design  
• The world's best-selling humidifier

For installation, contact us today!

**Aprilaire**  
HUMIDIFIERS  
The One Care For Dryness

**Airtronic Heating & Cooling**  
(248) 489-8180

**Arthritis Today**  
JOSEPH J. WEISS, M.D. RHEUMATOLOGY  
18829 Farmington Road  
Livonia, Michigan 48152  
Phone: (248) 428-7860

**ANOTHER PUNCHED NERVE THAT GIVE LEG PAIN**  
Many of us are familiar with sciatica. In that condition, compression of the nerves occurs in the lower lumbar spine, usually at the L4 and L5 level. The result is numbness, tingling, burning, or weakness down the leg from the lower back to the foot.

There is another nerve in the leg that becomes compressed, and causes a similar effect of burning, tingling and weakness. The nerve is called: the common peroneal nerve. This nerve circles, goes out back of the leg, goes around the head of the fibula and then descends down the front of the leg. As the nerve starts to descend, it splits into two parts: one part goes down the center of the leg to the foot, the other on the outside of the leg to the foot and side toe.

The peroneal nerve becomes vulnerable at the place it goes around the fibula. Injury to the bone, or lying on the side of the leg for a prolonged period causes compression at that site. The term "Saturday night palsy" refers to just such a compression that happens when, after a weekend of heavy alcohol intake, an individual falls face down, lying on the side of the leg for a prolonged period without moving brings on the nerve palsy. For reasons that are unclear, individuals with diabetes or hypothyroidism are also at risk for a peroneal nerve palsy even when no episode of compression occurs.

Nerve conduction studies confirm the diagnosis; in most cases, time alone suffices to heal any nerve damage. However, resolution may be slow, and the palsy that came on in days, may take months to resolve.

[www.drjweiss.yourmd.com](http://www.drjweiss.yourmd.com)