



DOCTOR DISCUSSION GUIDE

Managing Social Anxiety Disorder

Asking the right questions during your conversation with your doctor will help you know what to expect and how to better navigate your condition. Familiarize yourself with these common terms before your appointment to help facilitate your discussion.

Vocabulary to Know

Your doctor might mention these common terms. Here's what they mean.

Social Anxiety Disorder (SAD)	SAD, or social phobia, is characterized by an irrational fear of being judged, watched or being embarrassed or humiliated. SAD is one of the most common mental disorders, and the discomfort can become so extreme that it interferes with daily functioning.
Anxiety	Extreme apprehension that is accompanied by unpleasant symptoms like feeling nervous, irritable or on edge, having a sense of impending doom or danger, increased heart rate, breathing rapidly, sweating, or trembling, feeling weak or tired, difficulty concentrating, sleep disturbances, and gastrointestinal problems. A person with SAD feels anxiety in certain or all social situations.
Psychotherapy	Also referred to as “talk therapy,” this is any type service provided by a professional that uses talking, communication or interaction to assess, diagnose and treat a mental health issue.
Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT)	This type of therapy has been found to be the most effective type for SAD and focuses on identifying, understanding, and then changing thinking and behavior patterns through cognitive restructuring and behavioral techniques.
Group Therapy	A great place to learn coping strategies, gain confidence and build social skills in a non-threatening environment, group therapy is often recommended for those diagnosed with SAD. It is also a great opportunity to meet other people dealing with similar anxieties, deepening your understanding that you are not alone.
Anti-Anxiety Medications	Benzodiazepines are a commonly used, short-term, anti-anxiety medication. They work quickly to alleviate the symptoms of anxiety, but they do not treat the underlying cause of the anxiety and are extremely habit forming.
Antidepressants	Antidepressant medications like Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (or SSRIs) have been found to be effective in relieving the symptoms of anxiety. They may take a few months to begin working and sometimes patients report side effects, though they are usually not severe for most people.
Beta Blockers	This type of medication helps to alleviate the physical symptoms of anxiety like sweating, rapid heartrate and tremors.
Mindfulness	A mental training practice that involves paying attention to the present moment, on purpose and without judgement. Practicing mindfulness can be done through breathing techniques, mental imagery, body scans, relaxation exercises, gratitude practices and more. A type of therapy called mindfulness-based stress reduction (MBSR) is sometimes used to help treat those suffering from SAD.



Questions to Ask

These questions will help you start a conversation with your doctor about how to best manage SAD.

About Symptoms

- What are ways that I can alleviate and/or accept anxiety symptoms, in the moment, when they arise?

About Causes & Risk Factors

- Those suffering from SAD are at risk of other health problems like depression and/or alcohol and substance abuse. How can I avoid, or address, those issues in my own life?

About Diagnosis

- Are there different types of SAD? Which symptoms indicate the type that I have?

About Treatment

- What do you think my treatment plan should be? What do you think are the best next steps for me?
- I know that exercise, diet, and sleep play a big role in mental health and anxiety. What sorts of changes should I be making to help reduce my anxiety?
- What sort of therapy do you think I should pursue? Why do you think that particular type of therapy would be best suited for treating the social anxiety I am experiencing?
- Do you think mindfulness and meditation would be helpful to my recovery?
- Do you think therapy will be enough, or do you think I should speak to a psychiatrist about possibly incorporating medication into my treatment plan as well? Why or why not?
