

Title: Anxiety and Depression: What if I have both?

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Abstract: The addition of a benzodiazepine to an SSRI provides more rapid global improvement of generalized anxiety disorder and depression than an SSRI alone. Patients are less likely to discontinue treatment and more likely to show improvement than those receiving antidepressant monotherapy. In addition, the risks of benzodiazepine abuse are low outside of the setting of polysubstance abuse. Overall, patients with co-existing depression and anxiety should be treated in the initial few weeks with combination therapy to prevent premature drop-out from treatment.

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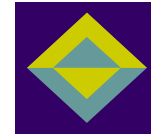
What else can I do to help myself?

- ♥ Regular exercise can improve symptoms of depression and anxiety. Even a little exercise helps.
- ♥ Talk with family and friends about how they can help.
- ♥ Try relaxation techniques, meditation, and breathing exercises.
- ♥ Consider joining a support group.



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Patient Education Tool
Family Medicine Clerkship

Anxiety &



Depression

What if I have both?



What is anxiety?

Anxiety is natural reaction when you are faced with a stressful or dangerous situation. In settings such as taking a test or driving in a blizzard, it can make you more alert and careful. It typically ends after the situation has passed. Anxiety becomes a disorder when it is persistent, irrational, and uncontrollable. Signs of an anxiety disorder include panic attack, excessive worry, persistent



fear, obsessive-compulsiveness, and nightmares or flashbacks following a traumatic event.

What is depression?

Symptoms of depression include persistent sadness, feelings of hopelessness or helplessness, loss of interest in hobbies, fatigue, insomnia, and loss of appetite. Depression is normal when it lasts for a short period of time. When symptoms last for more than 2 weeks and interfere with daily activities, such as going to work or school, it is called a major depressive episode.

What if I have symptoms of both disorders?

If you have symptoms of both anxiety disorder and major depression, you should see your doctor right away for further evaluation. Should you be diagnosed with having both disorders at the same time, it will be important to properly address each condition. Having both is known to be worse than having either condition alone. Possible consequences of having both disorders include:

- Lower chance of recovery
- Longer length of illness
- Increased thoughts and attempts of suicide
- Decreased daily function
- More money spent on treatment

You are not alone!

It is common for people to have both anxiety and depression. Studies show that half of all patients diagnosed with anxiety are also diagnosed with major depression. The good news: these disorders are treatable even when they occur together.

What are the recommended treatments?

MEDICATION

- ◇ Combination of Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI) and Benzodiazepine for first few weeks
 - ⇒ This combination treatment provides faster overall improvement and greater chance of treatment follow-through.
- ◇ SSRI alone for long-term use

PSYCHOTHERAPY

- ◇ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) works to replace negative thought patterns with more realistic and useful ones

