

In Top Form!

Test Anxiety

It's pretty normal to feel a little nervous and stressed before a test. Just about everyone does. And a touch of nervous anticipation can actually help you get revved and keep you at peak performance while you're taking the test. But for some people, this normal anxiety is more intense. The nervousness they feel before a test can be so strong that it interferes with their concentration or performance. Like other situations in which a person might feel performance anxiety, test anxiety can bring on "butterflies," a stomachache, or a tension headache. Some people might feel shaky, sweaty, or feel their heart beating quickly as they wait for the test to be given out. A student with really strong test anxiety may even feel like he or she might pass out or throw up.

What Can You Do?

Test anxiety can be a real problem when someone is so stressed out over a test that he or she can't get past the nervousness to focus on the test questions and do his or her best work. Feeling ready to meet the challenge, though, can keep test anxiety at a manageable level.



Use a little stress to your advantage.

Stress is your body's warning mechanism - it's a signal that helps you prepare for something important that's about to happen. Instead of reacting to the stress by dreading or complaining about the test, take an active approach.

Ask for help. Although a little test anxiety can be a good thing, an overdose of it is another story entirely. If sitting for a test gets you so stressed out that your mind goes blank and causes you to miss answers that you know, than your level of test anxiety probably needs some attention. Your teacher or school guidance counselor can be useful resources to talk to if you always get extreme test anxiety.

Be prepared. Some students think that going to class is all it should take to learn and do well on tests. But there's much more to learning than just hoping to soak everything up in class. That's why good study habits and skills are so important - and why no

amount of cramming or studying the night before a test can take the place of the deeper level of learning that happens over time with regular study.

Watch what you're thinking. If expecting to do well on a test can help you relax, what about when people expect they **won't** do well? Watch out for any negative messages you might be sending yourself. They can contribute to your anxiety.

Accept mistakes. Another thing you can do is to learn to keep mistakes in perspective - especially if you're a perfectionist or you tend to be hard on yourself. Everyone makes mistakes, and you may have even heard teachers or coaches refer to mistakes as "learning opportunities." Learning to tolerate small failures and mistakes - like that one problem you got wrong in the math pop quiz - is a valuable skill.

Fun In The SUN!

As Spring Break approaches and fun in the sun is near, here are some timely reminders on how to keep your skin protected and safe as you head out the door. You don't need to hide from the sun completely or wrap up like a mummy to protect yourself. But you should take these two steps:

1. Always wear sunscreen.
2. Take frequent breaks from the sun by going indoors or moving into the shade.

These steps are especially important between **10:00 in the morning and 4:00 in the afternoon**, when the sun's rays are strongest. Use a sunscreen with an SPF rating of 15 or higher. Put on sunscreen 15 to 20 minutes before going out in the sun. If you are fair skinned, you should use a sunscreen with a higher SPF rating such as SPF 30. Reapply sunscreen at least every 2 hours, just to be safe. Do this more often if you've been swimming or sweating a lot - even if the sunscreen is waterproof.

Be sure to put sunscreen all over your body. This includes some places you might not think of, like the tops of your ears, the back of your neck, the part in your hair, your face, and the tops of your feet.

Last but not least don't forget that your eyes need protection from ultraviolet rays, too. Always wear sunglasses in the bright sun, and make sure they have a label saying that they block UV rays.