

Handout on physical effects of fear and anxiety

How it can affect our bodies

Physical Reaction

The mind becomes focused and preoccupied with the thought 'what is the danger and how can I get safety'.

Symptom: Panic, preoccupation.

Physical Reaction

The brain sends a biochemical message to the pituitary gland, which releases a hormone, which triggers the adrenal gland to release adrenalin.

Symptom: Headaches, dizziness.

Physical Reaction: Pupils dilate.

Symptom: Blurred vision.

Physical Reaction: Mouth becomes dry.

Symptom: Difficulty swallowing.

Physical Reaction: Neck and shoulders tense - large skeletal muscles contract ready for action.

Symptom: Aching neck, backache, headache.

Physical reaction: Breathing becomes faster and shallower, supplying more oxygen to muscles.

Symptoms: Overbreathing, chest pains, tingling
Palpitations, asthma.

Physical Reaction: Heart pumps faster and blood pressure rises.

Symptoms: High blood pressure.

Physical Reaction: Liver releases stored sugar to provide fuel for quick energy.

Symptoms: Excess sugar in blood, indigestion.

Physical Reaction: Adrenalin and noradrenalin are released.

Physical Reaction: Digestion slows down or ceases as blood is diverted away from the stomach.

Symptoms: Nausea, indigestion, ulcers.

Physical Reaction: Muscles at the opening of the anus and bladder are relaxed.

Symptoms: Frequent urination, diarrhoea.

Physical Reaction: The body cools itself by perspiring: blood vessels and capillaries move close to the skin surface.

Symptoms: Excess sweating, blushing.

