

PRINCIPLES OF TREATMENT FOR ANXIETY DISORDERS

When should anxiety disorders be treated?

If a patient wants treatment for their anxiety disorder then it should be strongly considered to refer them for a CBT intervention. Options include:

- Use of the treatment modules in this manual to work through a treatment program with your patient.
- If eligible and suitable for a short-term focussed psychological strategy refer to the GP Allied Psychological Services Project for treatment.
- Refer to a mental health service if not suitable for a short term focussed psychological strategy.
- Referring to a private CBT clinician if the patient can afford and chooses this option.

Some anxiety disorders are best treated individually (Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, Generalised Anxiety Disorder, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) but many are treated more effectively in a group setting (Panic, Social Phobia, Specific Phobias), though individual work is also effective for them.

Treatment of Choice

Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT) is now widely recognised as the treatment of choice for anxiety disorders. Compared with medication the advantages of CBT are:

- Greater efficacy
- Fewer dropouts
- No side effects
- Lower relapse rates

By contrast, studies examining the effects of antidepressants and benzodiazepines report:

- High dropout rates
- Side effects
- Problems with dependence
- Return of symptoms upon cessation of medication

When to Use Medication

See the section titled “The Role of Medication in the Treatment of Anxiety Disorders” for details on medication use.