

Morning Anxiety

Many people tell me they experience anxiety immediately upon waking and that this is an awful and confusing way to start the day - they can't seem to work out why they feel this way and it seems to happen for no reason.

What does morning anxiety feel like?

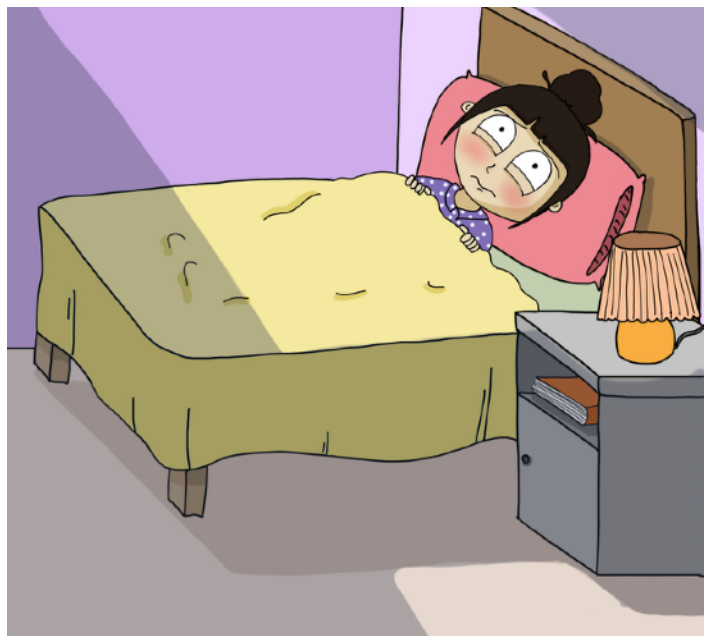


- Feeling anxious, on edge, stressed, wound up or restless when you wake up
- Feeling irritable or angry
- Physical symptoms; tight chest, tense muscles, fast breathing, fast heart rate, sweating, dizziness etc
- Fixating on worries and nerves
- Often feeling you can't 'put your finger' on why you feel anxious
- Fatigue
- Racing thoughts and difficulty concentrating

What causes morning anxiety?

If you experience morning anxiety, you probably experience general anxiety in your life too, and the causes of that often contribute to the morning anxiety. There are however, a few other distinct features and possible causes of this 'out of the blue' morning anxiety...

- The stress hormone cortisol is at its highest in the first hour after you wake up, especially when you have an increased level of stress and anxiety in your life anyway.
- What you eat and drink can contribute to higher anxiety; i.e. caffeine and sugar, and this combines with the low blood sugar you have from not eating for hours overnight
- Falling asleep with worries may cause you to wake overnight or in the morning with concerns and anxious thoughts



- Your body may have had a slight change while you were asleep, like a rise in temperature, and your brain perceived this as a physical anxiety symptoms which set off the 'anxiety cycle'

What helps morning anxiety?

- Limit caffeine. Ideally, switch to decaf or herbal tea on the mornings you wake feeling anxious. If anxiety is an ongoing issue for you, it may pay to cut out caffeine entirely
- Place your hand over your heart and start your day with some deep belly breaths. Take at least 3, or ideally, lie in bed for a few minutes and practice your breathing techniques
- Try to get enough sleep at night
- Reduce your overall levels of stress
- Repeat the mantra: "I allow this feeling to be. I do not need to fix this or try to figure this feeling out" as you go about your morning
- Move slowly and mindfully; try not to rush around, give yourself plenty of time to get ready for your day.
- Eat a good breakfast
- Get some exercise in your day
- Challenge any unhelpful thinking styles
- Practice grounding techniques throughout your morning
- Try the 'mindful tea drinking' grounding technique (guided video in this section)
- Don't fight the feeling or try to push it away. Practice mindful acceptance
- Use distraction techniques, focus on the experience of getting ready
- Limit alcohol intake, especially before bed at night (it only makes anxiety worse and causes poor sleep quality)
- Try to have 30 minutes of tech-free time upon waking. Going straight on your phone can activate the stress response
- If morning anxiety is interfering with your ability to live life and go about your day you could consider talking to a counsellor/therapist
- Try a calming shower where you do a body scan and practice mindfulness
- Take a short walk
- Create a morning routine and stick to that

