Diagnosis of Social Anxiety Disorder

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Social anxiety disorder is not well understood by the general public or by medical and mental health professionals. As a result, the majority of people with social anxiety disorder may be misdiagnosed or untreated.

The diagnosis of social anxiety disorder is based on the following criteria:

- Your anxiety disrupts your ability to function in daily life. It may interfere with:
  - Normal routines
  - Success in school
  - Career
  - Social relationships
- Your anxiety in social situations is very distressing

The process of making the diagnosis may include the following:

**Initial Assessment** – Your healthcare provider will ask questions about your symptoms and medical history. You may be asked how long the symptoms have been present, how distressing they are, and how they affect your ability to function. You may be given a psychological assessment as well.

**Evaluation of Medical Disorders** – Before social anxiety disorder is diagnosed, your healthcare provider may want to rule out other medical disorders (asthma, heart or lung diseases) that could cause your symptoms. You may be asked what medications, supplements, and other substances you use.

**Evaluation of Other Psychiatric Disorders** – Depression, substance abuse (alcoholism or drug abuse), and other anxiety disorders (generalized anxiety disorder, phobias, panic attacks) often occur with social anxiety disorder. You may be tested for these and other disorders.

**Laboratory Assessment** – Your healthcare provider may order urinalysis, blood tests (complete blood count, liver and kidney function tests, thyroid function test) and electrocardiogram.

**REFERENCES:**

Anxiety Disorders Association of America website. Available at: http://www.adaa.org/.

Social Phobia/Social Anxiety Association website. Available at: http://www.socialphobia.org/.


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