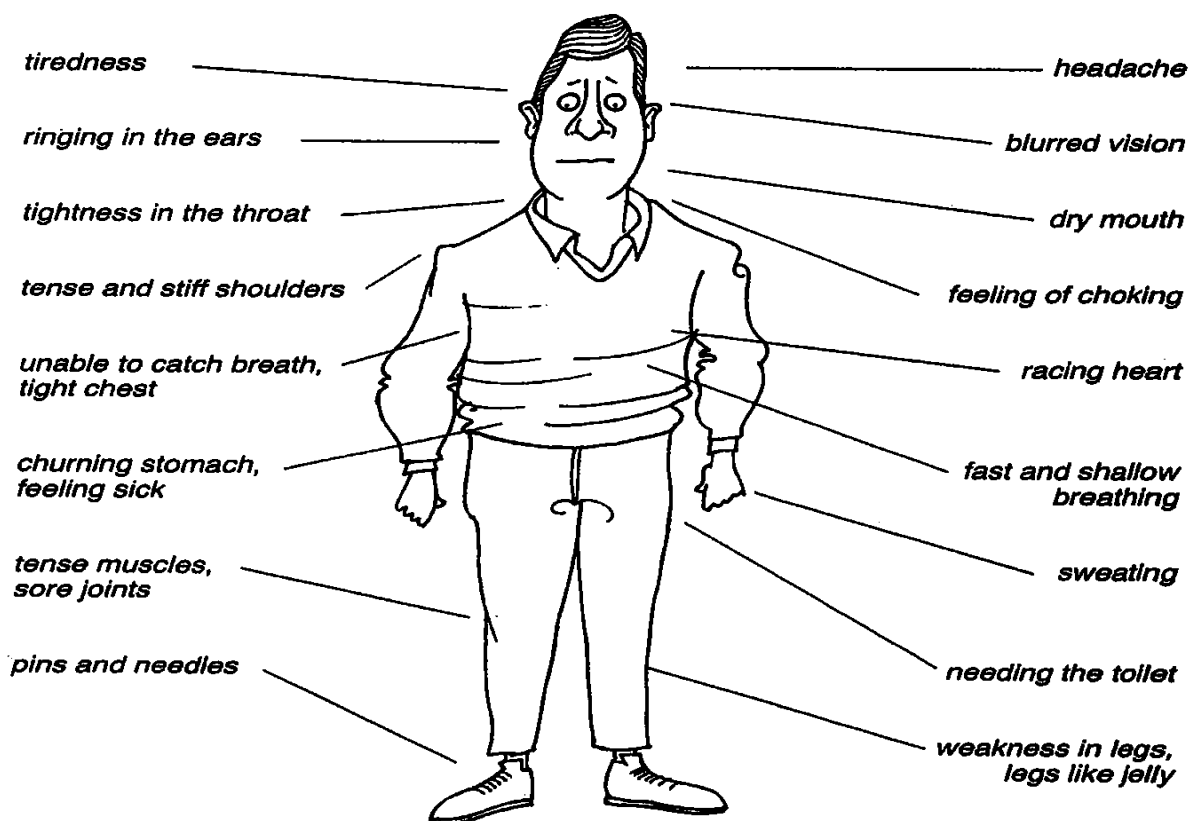


WHAT HAPPENS TO MY BODY WHEN I'M ANXIOUS?

When you are stressed, **adrenalin** gets released into your body. This is a chemical messenger which makes your body ready to run away or fight what it thinks is dangerous or threatening. When we were cave people, this was useful, as we were living in the wild and faced many dangers that were threatening to us. Obviously, this does not happen to us in the same way nowadays, but there are times when our body feels we are in danger and that harm might come to us: for example, if we are nearly knocked down by a car, or if climbing up a high step ladder or if hearing a sudden loud noise.

These are everyday events which may make anyone release adrenalin into his or her body. If someone is under stress or tends to worry a lot, adrenalin can be released into the body even though there is nothing really threatening or dangerous to that person. An everyday event, such as going to the shops, travelling by bus or being with a large group of people, can feel frightening and the body reacts by releasing adrenalin.

When adrenalin is released, the feelings in our body change and can make us feel horrible. If you look at the picture below, you may recognise some of these feelings. Most people will feel only some of these, not all.



EVERYDAY RELAXATION

When we are tense/anxious our body system speeds up – relaxation **slows** us down again.

If we can learn to turn **on** the bodily feelings of relaxation we can turn **off** the symptoms of tension. You can't experience relaxation and tension at the same time.

It is helpful to try and set aside some time every day for relaxing and unwinding. If possible this should be for at least 30 minutes a day. If you live with other people you might need to train them gradually to accept that you would like to be left alone at certain times each day. For some people just managing to have 30 minutes on their own every day can make a great deal of difference.

There are a number of things you can do that you might find relaxing. You might have to experiment to see which works best for you. Why not try some of these suggestions and see what effect they have on you. There may well be some other ideas that suit you better. Try them and see what is best for you.

Relaxing activities, some suggestions:

- have a long hot bath
- read an easy book
- listen to some soft music
- lie on your bed and imagine spending a million pounds
- yoga
- go for a walk
- swim
- cycle

When you are anxious, adrenalin builds up in your body. Daily exercise helps to use up some of this adrenalin. You will feel better as a result.