

## Natural Help 4...

# Claustrophobia



## What is Claustrophobia?

**Claustrophobia** is described as an **intense fear of being trapped or confined in small spaces**. The fear is often focused on not being able to escape or not having enough oxygen. A person **dealing with claustrophobia** often experiences great anxiety and difficulty breathing in small enclosed spaces, and may experience feelings of panic or even have a full panic attack. Unfortunately, as with many phobias, there is no easy **description of claustrophobia**.

Individuals with **claustrophobia** will often enter any enclosed area (such as a movie theatre) and immediately scan their surroundings for the nearest exit. They do their best to avoid small, confined spaces such as elevators, basements or cellars, airplanes, or even rooms with closed doors. **Crowded spaces can also trigger a claustrophobic reaction**, as exits may be blocked and a quick escape may be difficult.

Living and **dealing with claustrophobia** can be difficult and limiting, as the individual often has to avoid certain situations and places. Working on the 10th floor of a tall building means taking 10 flights of stairs each morning to avoid the elevator. Air travel may be impossible, and big parties might be avoided. The good news is that as with other phobias, **claustrophobia is treatable**.

## Diagnosing Claustrophobia

**Claustrophobia** would be diagnosed under the umbrella term of a phobia. Making **an appointment with a psychologist is the first step to treatment**. The psychologist will ask for a **description of claustrophobia** symptoms, their severity, and the situations that trigger them.

As with other phobias, **claustrophobia often occurs along with other disorders**, and so your psychologist will also try to rule out additional problems such as another category of anxiety disorder, depression, or substance abuse before a diagnosis is made.

## Who Suffers from Claustrophobia and is there a Cure?

**Claustrophobia** generally develops in early adulthood and is **one of the most commonly experienced phobias**-- although few people actually seek treatment. This is mostly because people are either unaware that treatments are successful and readily available, or because they have simply learned to live with their disorder. **People who are prone to panic attacks are also more likely to develop claustrophobia**, as they fear not being able to escape or get help

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should a panic attack occur.

**Dealing with claustrophobia** is very hard, as the condition can be very disruptive and limiting. While avoiding small spaces may work most days, the **claustrophobic** can never plan for every situation, and may have to endure episodes of extreme anxiety and panic.

Claustrophobics often find themselves **making life choices to accommodate their phobia**. For example, they may turn down business opportunities for fear of air-travel, or avoid attending movie theatres or live concerts - or they may just live with a constant fear at the back of their minds. **However, claustrophobia is treatable** and the associated panic need not be endured.

## What Causes Claustrophobia?

**Claustrophobia** develops as **the mind makes the association that small spaces psychologically translate to some imminent danger**. This usually occurs as the result of a bad past experience such as being trapped in an elevator during a power blackout, or after experiencing a panic attack and feeling the urgent need to escape.

People with **claustrophobia** can generally think back to their first **claustrophobic** experience. They may remember a traumatic event, or just remember an urgent sense of panic and not being able to breathe.

This same **fear reaction**, all of their panicked thoughts and feelings, become associated with the notion of a confined space that may be difficult to escape. Even though it is obviously an irrational thought, **the mind makes a connection that small spaces equal danger**, and the body follows the mind's cue by flooding them with physical symptoms of anxiety.

## Help for Claustrophobia

A number of **treatment options are available** to help overcome **claustrophobia**. Research has shown that phobias respond best to a combination of treatment models. A **holistic approach** would include appropriate therapeutic treatment by a registered psychologist, as well as the use of natural remedies, relaxation techniques, or other treatment methods such as hypnotherapy.

## Treatment Options for Claustrophobia

### Drug Treatment

While many people are prescribed scheduled drugs to control the anxiety associated with their **claustrophobia**, they often have unwanted side affects-- and certain drugs may be addictive. While prescription drugs may be beneficial, they may merely **mask the symptoms without addressing the underlying problems**.

### Natural Herbal and Homeopathic Remedies

There are certain **natural products that can be taken to help relieve some**



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### Michele Carelse, Clinical Psychologist



All of our natural remedies are formulated by our expert team of herbalists, naturopaths and homeopaths, and headed by Michele Carelse.

Michele has had years of experience in the manufacturing and use of natural remedies. In addition, she is a trained Clinical Psychologist and has been incorporating natural remedies into her treatment of patients with depression, anxiety, ADD, ADHD and stress for many years with spectacular results.

of the anxiety associated with **claustrophobia**, as well as to promote a sense of well-being, [healthy nerves](#) and soothe uneasy nerves. The calming effects of certain herbs such as Passiflora incarnata, Scutellaria laterifolia (Scullcap) and Valerian, can help to take the edge off the initial exposure to the feared situation. In addition, herbs such as Hypericum perforatum (St. John's Wort), may help to balance serotonin levels and reduce overall anxiety levels, resulting in a greater sense of ongoing well-being, calmness and confidence to face the feared situation. These remedies can be taken without the risk of unwanted side effects and can help to support the body's natural balance and serenity.

There are also certain homeopathic remedies that are recommended for specific phobias and which can help to reduce the symptoms of anxiety and panic - usually related to the phobia.

## Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

**Desensitization or exposure therapy is the most common method of treating claustrophobia.** This therapy includes gradual exposure to the feared situation at a gentle pace, followed by discussion of fears surrounding this situation.

## Relaxation Techniques

Meditation, deep breathing and muscle relaxation are a few techniques that have been shown to reduce anxiety, promote a [healthy nervous system](#) and clear the mind of unwanted thoughts and concerns.

## Other Conditions Related to Claustrophobia

Being **claustrophobic** can put an enormous strain on an individual. As a result, these **people often develop unhealthy coping strategies** such as substance abuse. Other problems also associated with the disorder include additional phobias, an anxiety disorder, or depression (especially if you find yourself turning down longed for opportunities because of your fear).

## Tips for Coping with Claustrophobia

- **Take small steps towards conquering your claustrophobia.** If you attempt to rush into it, you may feel overwhelmed and discouraged. Similarly, if you avoid taking any steps, you may never conquer your fear! Set attainable goals and once you reach them, make the next one slightly more challenging.
- **Learn relaxation techniques** to help you manage your anxiety and fear. This can be done by consulting a psychologist or by the use of a self-help CD (The Calm Within CD), specifically designed for this purpose. Practice these techniques when you find yourself in a small confined space. Trying to [stay calm](#) can reduce [nervous tension](#).
- **Think positively!** Try being optimistic and maintain a [positive attitude](#) when facing your fear by reminding yourself that you have the power over your fear and that there is no real danger.
- **Take steps to empower yourself** in other areas of your life. Take up a hobby or sport, join a club or take a self-help course. This often has a 'spill

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over effect' on anxiety in general. If you help yourself to feel more confident, you will feel more in control of your situation and more able to conquer your fears.

- **Read as much as you can about your condition.** There are many self help books and support that can be very valuable.

## The Natural Approach

While Western medicine has become the norm in many cultures, it is **not the only treatment option**. Conventional Western medicine (often called allopathic or orthodox medicine) is the system of medicine taught at most medical schools, and many pharmaceutical and synthetic medicines are manufactured and marketed according to the principles of allopathic medicine.

Because most of us in the Western world have grown up in a society in which allopathic medicine is the prevailing norm, we forget that only a few decades ago, homeopathic, herbal and other natural medicines were commonly available and freely used-- even by conventional doctors. While there are often heated debates about which system of medicine is 'better' than the other, many responsible doctors (whether they are allopathic or not) recognize that **both have a role to play in the treatment program**.

Natural medicine has often been frowned upon by conventional doctors, especially by those who do not have sufficient knowledge of these medicines. However, it is encouraging to note that some medical schools are now beginning to re-introduce it into their course work, thereby **providing doctors with a wider range of treatment options** from which to choose. In many countries, especially in Europe, India and China, **natural and homeopathic medicines are commonly prescribed** by conventional doctors and represent a significant part of the total annual drug sales.

Naturopathy is a branch of medicine (just as allopathy is a branch of medicine) which operates according to the underlying philosophy that the **body has an innate capacity to heal itself**. While natural medicines are often called 'alternative' or 'complimentary' medicines, they are, in fact, a **unique and independent form of medicine** in their own right, well able to **treat a variety of conditions**. Perhaps the term 'holistic' medicine is more apt, given the broad range of treatment options and approaches which are to be found within the practice of natural medicine. This encompasses many different disciplines, including herbalism, homeopathy, iridology, osteopathy, chiropractic, therapeutic massage techniques, aromatherapy, acupuncture and many, many more.

Most naturopaths will use a variety of treatment modalities in order to treat their patients in a **holistic way to support health, relieve symptoms and prevent future disease**. In fact, even the World Health Organization defines health as being "... more than simply the absence of illness. It is the active state of physical, emotional, mental and social well-being." This is a wonderfully clear description of holistic or natural medicine, which strives to **support health** (thereby relieving or preventing symptoms), rather than simply eliminating disease.

Although allopathic medicine certainly has a role to play and has made a tremendous contribution to medical science during the past century, there is a growing perception that it is not the only answer. In many cases, **holistic**



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**medicine can accomplish just as much**, if not more – without the risk of side effects, addiction and sacrifice to health so commonly associated with pharmaceutical drugs. Contrary to common perception, and provided that they are manufactured in the correct way, **natural medicines can work quickly and safely to promote healing**.

In many cases, they can **succeed where pharmaceutical drugs have failed**. Despite frequent reports that they are ‘unproven’ and ‘untested’, the opposite is true. Natural medicines have a **long history of usage** and there is a **wealth of empirical evidence** to support their effectiveness and safety. In addition, active clinical research is carried out by many academic hospitals and universities to **support the extensive traditional and empirical evidence behind natural medicines**.

It is also important to know that, like any medicine, herbal and homeopathic medicines **must be manufactured in the correct way**, following acceptable procedures and manufacturing methods to ensure maximum effectiveness and safety. Due to the recent rise in popularity of natural remedies, many companies have sprung up to take advantage of the market. Unfortunately, **not all of them are equipped to manufacture to the correct standards**, often resulting in a flood of inferior (and sometimes even unsafe) remedies onto the market – and giving natural remedies a bad name.

Even some pharmaceutical companies have rushed to claim their market share by producing so-called ‘standardized’ extracts of herbs and offering these as superior to the tried and tested methods of naturopathic manufacturing. Nothing could be further from the truth. While **‘standardized’ extracts** may offer benefit of easy consistency of dosage (and cheaper more efficient production lines), they have **grave disadvantages**, including an increase in side effects, as the medicines produced in this manner lose the natural protective properties of the herbs. In some cases, these side effects have proved fatal – as was seen in the liver toxicity associated with standardized extracts of kava kava, a herb previously safely used for generations without any known side effects.

Most naturopaths recommend what is called the Full Spectrum Method of extraction – which **retains the benefits of ALL the active ingredients within the herb** as opposed to isolating only one – thereby providing a more complete treatment as well as superior protection against side effects.

Whatever your choice, **always choose wisely**. Research what is best for you. If you have a chronic or life-threatening condition, don’t make changes without first discussing them with your doctor, in order that your condition may be monitored. **Well-informed and supportive practitioners will support patients** who want to take responsibility for their own health.

## **Related Natural Remedies:**

**PureCalm:** Aids nervous system in stress resistance for balanced moods and feelings of well-being.

PureCalm is a 100% safe, non-addictive herbal remedy that has been specially formulated by a Clinical Psychologist for adults and children.

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**balance in the brain and nervous system**, without harmful side effects and without sedatives. This remedy contains a selection of herbs known for their supportive function in maintaining brain health.

PureCalm can especially benefit those individuals needing support overcoming worry, managing stress and promoting inner calm related to certain situations. Natural stress relief products such as PureCalm can be **used consistently, without side effects or compromising health.**

[Learn more about PureCalm](#)

**MindSoothe:** Promote balanced mood and feelings of well-being.

MindSoothe is a 100% safe, non-addictive, natural herbal remedy that has been especially formulated by a Clinical Psychologist for adults and teens, and comes in a compact capsule form, making it easy to take.

MindSoothe can be used to **safely maintain emotional health, balanced mood and systemic harmony in the brain and nervous system**, without harmful side effects.

This remedy contains a selection of herbs known for their calming and supportive function in maintaining brain and nervous system health, emotional balance and overall well-being.

[Learn more about MindSoothe](#)

**Nerve Tonic:** Promotes nervous system health, maintains balanced mood and worry-free mind.

Triple Complex Nerve Tonic is a combination of three cell-supporting tissue salts, especially selected for their **effect on brain and nervous system health**. This combination of tissue salts can be used regularly in a general capacity to **promote systemic balance in the brain**, spinal cord and the entire nervous system, as well as in conjunction with other remedies to maintain therapeutic effectiveness.

Tissue salts, also called cell salts or biochemic salts, are composed of **minerals that occur naturally at a cellular level in our bodies** and all organic matter on earth (plants, rocks and soil).

There have been **twelve essential tissue salts** identified as important components of all body cells and without which, true health is not possible. Each tissue salt plays a different, yet vital role in maintaining cellular health in the organs and **nervous systems** of the body.

Ensuring the healthy functioning of all brain and nervous system cells enhances the bio-availability of supplements, remedies and even nutrients in your diet. It also lessens the chance of a **nervous breakdown. Treating panic disorder** in people who suffer a **nervous breakdown** usually involves therapy. The doctor **treating panic disorder** will monitor the symptoms carefully to establish a treatment plan that aims to restore the health of the **nervous system.**

And, because our tissue salts are naturally occurring in the body and manufactured



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to ensure safe, yet optimum potency, they are safe to use for all ages, as well as during pregnancy.

[Learn more about Nerve Tonic](#)

**MindSoothe Jr.:** Promotes emotional and psychological health and balanced mood in children.

MindSoothe Jr. is a 100% safe, non-addictive, natural herbal remedy, especially formulated by a Clinical Psychologist for children.

MindSoothe Jr. supports the brain's **natural ability to regulate emotion and mood** – maintaining production of essential brain hormones and chemicals related to nervous system health and emotional well-being, thereby helping to maintain balanced mood and optimum performance. MindSoothe Jr. can be used to safely promote well-being and naturally support health and systemic balance in the brain and nervous system - **without any harmful side effects** or risk of addiction.

Instead of the capsules used in the adult formula, MindSoothe Jr. comes in convenient and easy to administer drop form – making it simple to adjust dosage for different age groups.

The formula remains true to the **whole spectrum method** of herbal extraction, ensuring the bio-availability and balance of all the active ingredients contained in the remedy. This method of manufacture maintains all active ingredients in perfect balance – exactly as nature intended!

[Learn more about MindSoothe Jr.](#)

Read the testimonials for these quality products [here!](#)

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