### Diagnostic Criteria (DSM-IV-TR 300.29) Specific Phobia (formerly Simple Phobia)

A. Marked and persistent fear that is excessive or unreasonable, cued by the presence or anticipation of a specific object or situation (e.g., flying, heights, animals, receiving an injection, seeing blood).

B. Exposure to the phobic stimulus almost invariably provokes an immediate anxiety response, which may take the form of a situationally bound or situationally predisposed Panic Attack. Note: In children, the anxiety may be expressed by crying, tantrums, freezing, or clinging.

C. The person recognizes that the fear is excessive or unreasonable. Note: In children, this feature may be absent.

D. The phobic situation(s) is avoided or else is endured with intense anxiety or distress.

E. The avoidance, anxious anticipation, or distress in the feared situation(s) interferes significantly with the person's normal routine, occupational (or academic) functioning, or social activities or relationships, or there is marked distress about having the phobia.

F. In individuals under age 18 years, the duration is at least 6 months.

G. The anxiety, Panic Attacks, or phobic avoidance associated with the specific object or situation are not better accounted for by another mental disorder, such as Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder (e.g., fear of dirt in someone with an obsession about contamination), Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (e.g., avoidance of stimuli associated with a severe stressor), Separation Anxiety Disorder (e.g., avoidance of school), Social Phobia (e.g., avoidance of social situations because of fear of embarrassment), Panic Disorder With Agoraphobia, or Agoraphobia Without History of Panic Disorder.

**Specify type:**

- Animal Type
- Natural Environment Type (e.g., heights, storms, water)
- Blood-Injection-Injury Type
- Situational Type (e.g., airplanes, elevators, enclosed places)
- Other Type (e.g., phobic avoidance of situations that may lead to choking, vomiting, or contracting an illness; in children, avoidance of loud sounds or costumed characters)

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### Diagnostic Criteria (ICD 10 F40.2) Specific (Isolated) Phobias

These are phobias restricted to highly specific situations such as proximity to particular animals, heights, thunder, darkness, flying, closed spaces, urinating or defecating in public toilets, eating certain foods, dentistry, the sight of blood or injury, and the fear of exposure to specific diseases. Although the triggering situation is discrete, contact with it can evoke panic as in agoraphobia or social phobias. Specific phobias usually arise in childhood or early adult life and can persist for decades if they remain untreated. The seriousness of the resulting handicap depends on how easy it is for the sufferer to avoid the phobic situation. Fear of the phobic situation tends not to fluctuate, in contrast to agoraphobia. Radiation sickness and venereal infections and, more recently, AIDS are common subjects of disease phobias.

### Diagnostic Guidelines

All of the following should be fulfilled for a definite diagnosis:

(a) psychological or autonomic symptoms must be primary manifestations of anxiety, and not secondary to other symptoms such as delusion or obsessional thought;

(b) anxiety must be restricted to the presence of the particular phobic object or situation; and

(c) phobic situation is avoided whenever possible.

**Includes:**

* acrophobia
* animal phobias
* claustrophobia
* examination phobia
* simple phobia