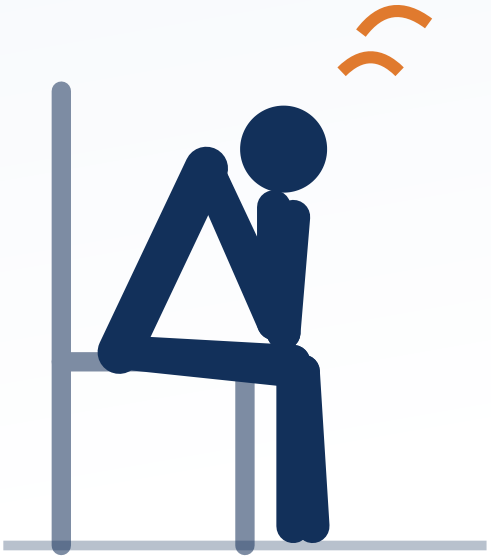
Somatic symptom disorder (somatization)

Real Symptoms, Normal Tests?



Dr Anand Diwan

Consultant Neurologist · Adults & Children
Brain, spine, nerve & muscle specialist

MBBS, DNB (Neurology) · MMC Reg. No. 88279

Scan to book your appointment

Conditions treated at our clinic

- Epilepsy and seizures (fits)
- Stroke and paralysis
- Migraine and frequent headache
- Vertigo, giddiness, loss of balance
- Parkinson's disease, tremor, slowness
- Memory loss, dementia
- Neck and back pain, sciatica, spondylosis
- Numbness, tingling, nerve pain (neuropathy)
- Muscle weakness (myopathy)
- Head injury after an accident
- Sleep problems
- Children: seizures, developmental delay, slow walking or talking

Tests at Narayani Hospital, under one roof

EEG · Video EEG · EMG / NCS · VEP · BERA · VNG (vertigo test) · CT brain · CSF test · All blood tests

Not everyone needs tests. When they are needed, Dr Diwan explains which ones and why.

What is somatic symptom disorder?

Some people have **real, troublesome body symptoms** — pain, stomach problems, tiredness, dizziness, numbness — often for years. They visit many doctors and do many tests, but the reports are normal or do not fully explain the symptoms. The worry and time spent on the symptoms keep growing.

The symptoms are real

This is **not imagination, pretending or "drama"**. The pain and discomfort are real. They come from the way the brain and body work together — and they can be treated.



The mind–body connection

Everyone has felt it: the heart races with fear, the stomach churns before an exam, the neck tightens with tension. Long-term stress, worry or sadness can make the brain turn up the "volume" of body signals, so normal sensations are felt as pain or illness.

Common symptoms

- Pain — head, neck, back, joints, chest
- Acidity, gas, loose motions, constipation
- Tiredness, weakness
- Giddiness
- Palpitations, breathlessness
- Tingling, numbness, burning
- Poor sleep
- Menstrual and sexual problems

Who gets it, and why it continues

- More common in women; often starts before age 30
- Linked with stress, anxiety, depression, family or work problems, and difficult past experiences
- Not contagious, and not caused by any fault of the patient

The vicious cycle



Treatment aims to break this cycle.

Functional neurological symptoms

Sometimes the brain's "software" goes wrong while the "hardware" (brain structure) is normal. This can cause:

- Weakness or numbness of an arm, leg or one side
- Difficulty walking, shaking, or jerks
- Speech difficulty or loss of voice
- **Attacks that look like fits** but are not epilepsy (dissociative seizures)

A neurologist diagnoses these from **specific signs on examination**, not just from normal tests. **Video EEG** at Narayani Hospital helps tell dissociative attacks apart from epilepsy, so that unnecessary epilepsy medicines are avoided. Physiotherapy and psychological therapy help most people improve.

Diagnosis — and what must not be missed

- A full history and examination by one trusted doctor
- Needed tests are done **once**; repeating normal tests does not help and increases worry
- Screening for anxiety and depression, which are common and treatable

See a doctor promptly for these new signs

- Weight loss without trying; fever
- Blood in vomit, stool or urine
- Pain that wakes you at night
- New symptoms after age 50
- Weakness that keeps getting worse

Treatment

Understanding the diagnosis

Knowing that the symptoms are real, not dangerous, and treatable is the first step.

One regular doctor

Planned visits every few weeks — not only when symptoms flare.

Counselling (CBT)

Talking therapy teaches you to handle stress and break the worry–symptom cycle.

Medicines when needed

Low-dose medicines such as amitriptyline or duloxetine reduce pain and improve sleep and mood. They are **not habit-forming**.

Exercise and routine

Daily walking, yoga, breathing exercises, regular sleep; slowly return to work and activities.

What to do — and what not to do

Do

- Keep one doctor and follow the treatment plan
- Tell the doctor all your symptoms and worries
- Exercise daily and keep a routine
- Spend time with family and friends; keep hobbies

Don't

- Go from doctor to doctor for the same complaint
- Do tests without a doctor's advice
- Take sleeping pills, strong painkillers or tonics on your own
- Stay alone or turn to alcohol and tobacco
- Search symptoms on the internet again and again

For family members

- Believe that the symptoms are real
- Avoid saying "it's all in your mind" or "nothing is wrong with you"
- Encourage activity, not rest in bed
- Praise small steps of progress
- Reduce stress and conflict at home

If there are thoughts of self-harm

Seek help immediately. Call the free national mental health helpline **Tele-MANAS: 14416** (24×7), or go to the nearest hospital.

Remember

- Your symptoms are real — and treatable.
- Normal reports are good news, not a mistake.
- One doctor, regular visits, fewer tests.
- Counselling, exercise and routine work.
- Improvement is gradual — be patient.

My weekly goals

Goal (walk, work, meet friends)	Done?

Appointments

Monday to Saturday · Closed on Sundays

Narayani Hospital

Consultation, tests & admission

Shree Vallabh Nagar, behind Chaan Hotel, near Mumbai Naka, Nashik 422009
Consult 11 am – 3 pm · Tests 10 am – 5 pm
Hospital open 24 hours for emergencies

☎ **0253 2224411**

Dr Anand Diwan Neurology Clinic

Evening consultation

11 Yashika Plaza, near Satyam Sweet, Govind Nagar, Nashik 422009
Consult 6 pm – 8 pm

☎ **0253 2472111**

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Read more online

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This booklet gives general information and does not replace medical advice. In an emergency, go to the nearest hospital.