

From Clowns to Buttons, These Weird Phobias Afflict Many People

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[Fear](#) itself is not a bad thing — it can actually serve a protective, [useful purpose](#). In some cases it leads to [fight or flight](#), the body's *sympathetic nervous* system response to a perceived threat. But when fear is irrational, excessive and detrimental to someone's life, it's classified as a [phobia](#). About [19 million people in the U.S.](#) have at least one phobia. You've probably heard of common phobias, such as agoraphobia (public places or open spaces), claustrophobia (confined spaces), or arachnophobia (snakes). But there are other rather unusual phobias that present unique challenges to people's lives.

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