

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder



The Anxiety Disorders Association of America (ADAA) is a national 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization whose mission is to promote the prevention, treatment and cure of anxiety disorders and to improve the lives of all people who suffer from them. Help ADAA help others. Donate now at [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org).

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Anxiety Disorders Association of America  
8730 Georgia Ave., Suite 600  
Silver Spring, MD 20910

Phone: 240-485-1001

“ I worry about *everything*, even when there is nothing to worry about. I’m always restless, on edge, irritable, and waiting for the other shoe to drop. ”

## What is generalized anxiety disorder?

We all worry. Relationships, deadlines, being on time to an appointment – you name it, there’s plenty in life to worry about. But people with generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, experience persistent, excessive, and unrealistic worry that goes on every day, possibly all day. They feel it’s beyond their control.

People with GAD often expect the worst, even when there is no reason for any concern. Their worrying occurs on more days than not for at least six months and often concerns health, family, money, or work. The exaggerated, unrelenting worrying interferes with every day living. Physical symptoms often accompany it and include restlessness, irritability, muscle tension, fatigue, and difficulty sleeping or concentrating.

## What’s the difference between normal anxiety and GAD?

### Normal Anxiety

Worry about a specific event, such as a work deadline, school exam, or upcoming medical appointment

Difficulty relaxing, sleeping, or concentrating when faced with a serious problem such as an illness, job loss, or death of a loved one

Muscle aches, tension, tiredness related to an activity or situation such as overexertion at the gym, a stressful day at work, or sitting too long at the computer

### GAD

Constant, chronic, and unsubstantiated worry causing significant stress, disrupting social activities and interfering with work, school, or family

Edginess, irritability, insomnia, or difficulty concentrating more days than not for no apparent reason

Restlessness, muscle aches and pain, and fatigue not related to a specific physical or emotional problem persisting for six months or more

## About Anxiety Disorders

Anxiety is normal. It helps us get out of harm’s way and prepare for important events.

It warns us when we need to take action. But if you have anxiety that is persistent, irrational, and overwhelming and interferes with daily activities, you may have an anxiety disorder.

The term “anxiety disorders” refers to generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)**, social anxiety disorder, and specific phobias.

For more information, visit [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org).



“I was so relieved when my doctor put a name to my problem, to discover that there are other people like me, to learn that there is hope.”

## How can GAD affect your life?

Generalized anxiety disorder can affect all areas of life, including social, work, school and family. According to a national survey conducted by the Anxiety Disorders Association of America, 7 out of 10 people with GAD agreed that their chronic anxiety had an impact on their relations with spouses or significant others and two-thirds reported that GAD had a negative effect on their friendships.

## What causes GAD?

The exact cause of GAD is not known. Scientists believe that biological factors, family background, and life experiences are all involved. And we can't leave out stress. Even the stress of positive events, such as buying a new house or getting married, can trigger symptoms in those who are predisposed to GAD.

## What treatments are available?

Most people who seek treatment for GAD and other anxiety disorders see significant improvement and enjoy a better quality of life. A variety of treatment options exists, including cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure therapy, anxiety management, and medications. One or a combination of these may be recommended. Learn more about treatment options at [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org).

There is no single best treatment. What works for one person may not be the best choice for someone else. A course of treatment should be tailored to your individual needs. Ask your doctor to explain why a particular type of treatment is being recommended, what other options are available, and what you need to do to fully participate in your recovery.

## How can ADAA help you?

Suffering from GAD or any anxiety disorder can interfere with many aspects of your life. ADAA can provide the resources that will help you and your loved ones better understand your condition, connect you with a community of people who know what you are experiencing, and assist you in finding mental health professionals who can help.

Visit ADAA at [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org) to locate doctors and therapists who treat GAD and other anxiety disorders, as well as local support groups. Learn about the causes, symptoms, and treatments for anxiety disorders; review questions to ask a therapist or doctor; and find helpful materials to help family and loved ones. ADAA is here to help you make the best decisions so that you can get on with your life.

# Take Five & Manage Your Anxiety

*You are not alone. Talk to someone – a friend, loved one or doctor. Get help. Anxiety disorders are real, serious, and treatable.*

Whether you have normal anxiety or an anxiety disorder, these strategies will help you cope:

Exercise.  
Go for a walk or jog.  
Do yoga.  
Dance. Just get moving!

Talk to someone ... spouse, significant other, friend, child, or doctor.

Keep a daily journal.  
Become aware of what triggers your anxiety.

Eat a balanced diet.  
Don't skip meals.  
Avoid caffeine, which can trigger anxiety symptoms.  
Contact

ADAA at [www.adaa.org](http://www.adaa.org). Let us help you help yourself.

## Generalized Anxiety Disorder Self-Test

If you suspect that you might suffer from GAD, answer the questions below and share them with your health care professional.

### Are you troubled by the following?

- Y  N Excessive worry, occurring more days than not, for at least six months?
- Y  N Unreasonable worry about work, school, or your health?
- Y  N Inability to control your worry?

### Are you bothered by at least three of the following symptoms?

- Y  N Restlessness, feeling keyed up, or on edge
- Y  N Being easily tired
- Y  N Problems concentrating
- Y  N Irritability
- Y  N Muscle tension
- Y  N Trouble falling or staying asleep or restless and unsatisfying sleep
- Y  N Anxiety interfering with your daily life

Having more than one illness at the same time can make it difficult to diagnose and treat the different conditions. Depression and substance abuse are among the conditions that occasionally complicate GAD and other anxiety disorders.

- Y  N **Have you experienced changes in sleeping or eating habits?**

### More days than not, do you feel...

- Y  N sad or depressed?
- Y  N disinterested in life?
- Y  N worthless or guilty?

### During the last year, has the use of alcohol or drugs...

- Y  N resulted in your failure to fulfill responsibilities with work, school, or family?
- Y  N placed you in a dangerous situation, such as driving a car under the influence?
- Y  N gotten you arrested?
- Y  N continued despite causing problems for you or your loved ones?