

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.

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“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 (GAD)?

We all worry. Relationships, deadlines, being on time to an appointment – you name it, there’s plenty in life to worry about. But those with GAD experience persistent, excessive and unrealistic worry that goes on every day, possibly all day. They feel it’s beyond their control and can’t be turned “off.”

People with GAD often expect the worst, even when there is no good reason for any concern. The excessive worrying is often about health, family, money or work. The worrying is hard to control, and occurs on more days than not for at least six months. The exaggerated, unrelenting worrying interferes with every day living. Physical symptoms 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 doctor’s appointment

GAD

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

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

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

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

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 a normal part of living. It’s the body’s way of telling us something isn’t right. It keeps us from harm’s way and prepares us to act quickly in the face of danger. However, for some people, anxiety is persistent, irrational and overwhelming. It may get in the way of day-to-day activities and

even make them impossible. This may be a sign of an anxiety disorder.

The term “anxiety disorders” describes a group of conditions including **generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)**, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), social anxiety disorder (SAD) and specific phobias. For information on all of the anxiety disorders visit 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 (ADAA), seven out of 10 people with GAD agreed that their chronic anxiety had an impact on their relations with spouses/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 of course, we cannot forget about stress. Even the stress of positive events, such as buying a new house or getting married, can trigger symptoms in individuals predisposed to GAD.

What treatments are available?

Fortunately, most individuals who seek treatment for GAD and other anxiety disorders see significant improvement and enjoy a better quality of life. A variety of treatment options exist including cognitive-behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, anxiety management and medications. One, or a combination of these, may be recommended. Details about these treatments are available on the ADAA website at www.adaa.org.

It is important to remember that there is no single “right” treatment. What works for one person may or 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 give you 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 in your city who can help. Visit the ADAA website at www.adaa.org to locate doctors and therapists who treat GAD and other anxiety disorders in your area, as well as local support groups. Learn about the causes, symptoms and best treatments for all of the anxiety disorders, review questions to ask a therapist or doctor and find helpful books, tapes and other 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.
Let us help you help yourself.

Generalized Anxiety Disorder Self-Test

If you think you might have GAD, take the test below. Answer "yes" or "no" to the questions and discuss the results with your doctor.

Yes or no?

Are you troubled by:

Y N Excessive worry, occurring more days than not, for at least 6 months?

Y N Unreasonable worry about a number of different situations, such as work, school and/or health?

Y N Your inability to control or "shut off" your worry?

Yes or no?

Are you bothered by at least 3 of the following:

Y N Restlessness, feeling keyed up or on edge?

Y N Being easily tired?

Y N Concentration problems?

Y N Irritability?

Y N Muscle tension?

Y N Trouble falling asleep, staying asleep or restless/unsatisfying sleep?

Y N Anxiety that interferes with your daily life?

Having more than one illness at the same time can make it difficult to diagnose and treat the different conditions. Conditions that sometimes complicate anxiety disorders include depression and substance abuse, among others. The following information will help your healthcare professional in evaluating you for GAD.

Yes or no?

In the last year, have you experienced:

Y N Changes in sleeping or eating habits?

Y N Feeling sad or depressed more days than not?

Y N A disinterest in life more days than not?

Y N A feeling of worthlessness or guilt more days than not?

Y N An inability to fulfill responsibilities at work/school or family due to alcohol or drug use?

Y N A dangerous situation, such as driving under the influence, caused by alcohol or drug use?

Y N Being arrested due to alcohol or drugs?

Y N The need to continue using alcohol or drugs despite it causing problems for you and/or your loved ones?