

Symptoms

Generalised anxiety disorder

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Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) can be a long-term condition. It makes you feel anxious about a wide range of situations and issues, rather than one specific event.

People with GAD feel anxious most days. You may struggle to remember the last time you felt relaxed.

GAD can affect your physical and mental health.

The severity of the symptoms is different from person to person.

Talk to your GP if anxiety is affecting your daily life or is causing you distress.

Psychological symptoms

GAD can cause a change in your behaviour and the way you think and feel about things.

This can cause symptoms such as:

- restlessness
- a sense of dread
- feeling "on edge"
- difficulty concentrating
- irritability
- muscle tension
- disturbed sleep

Your symptoms may cause you to withdraw from social contact - to avoid feelings of worry and dread.

You may find going to work difficult and stressful. You may take time off sick. This can make you worry more and impact your self-esteem.

If you have GAD you'll normally experience excessive anxiety and worry for more days than not, for at least 6 months. This worry can be about a number of events or activities, such as work or school performance.

Physical symptoms

The physical symptoms associated with GAD, include:

- dizziness
- tiredness
- a strong, fast or irregular heartbeat
- muscle aches and tension
- trembling or shaking
- a dry mouth
- excessive sweating
- shortness of breath
- tummy ache
- feeling sick
- a headache
- pins and needles
- difficulty falling or staying asleep

Anxiety triggers

If you're anxious because of [panic disorder](#) or a specific [phobia](#), you'll usually know what the cause is.

If you have GAD, it may not always be clear what you're feeling anxious about. Not knowing what triggers your anxiety can make it feel worse. You may start to worry that there's no solution.

When to get help for anxiety

Feelings of anxiety at certain times are completely normal. It's important to see your GP if anxiety is affecting your daily life.

Your GP will ask about your symptoms and your worries, fears and emotions to find out if you could have GAD.

Causes

Many people develop GAD for no obvious reason. But several factors can play a role in the cause of GAD.

They include:

- overactivity in areas of the brain linked to emotions and behaviour
- biological factors
- the genes you inherit from your parents
- a history of stressful or traumatic experiences, such as domestic violence
- a painful long-term health condition
- a history of drug or alcohol misuse

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