

Generalised Anxiety Disorder

Generalised anxiety disorder (GAD) is the feeling of being anxious about almost everything and anything for no real apparent reason. Often, people affected by GAD will feel overly worried about a wide range of things relating to a variety of topics including health, money, work, school and relationships.



GAD is therefore a condition which leaves people feeling anxious about a multitude of things rather than any one specific thing. While most of us worry or feel anxious at some point in our lives, those who experience generalised anxiety find it particularly difficult to control their worries. GAD is a common condition, **estimated to affect up to 5% of the UK population.**

Anxiety involves the **physical and psychological reaction** that is necessary to prepare a body for either running away or fighting if necessary

- known as the **'fight or flight' response**. This was certainly how we were able to equip ourselves to deal with danger in our distant past. The autonomic nervous system prepares the body to cope with danger by releasing adrenaline which in turn increases blood pressure and puts the body and senses into a state of intense awareness, increased sensitivity and hyper alertness. When the body triggers off this response the person essentially feels "nervous". You would have felt this when you had an exam coming up or had to give a talk or found yourself having to cross a very busy road. The nervous system puts your body in an alert state so that you can be at your best to deal with what it interprets as a dangerous or life threatening situation. These days, however, events that trigger the flight or fight response are not usually life threatening or dangerous. Our stresses are more likely to involve meeting a deadline at work, being stuck in traffic or finding our bills are piling up. The flight or fight response doesn't help us with these modern day stresses. Anxiety becomes a problem when it is so constant, so pervasive that it interferes with our lives.

Physical symptoms of anxiety can include:

- Sweating
- Heavy and fast breathing
- Hot flushes or blushing
- Dry mouth
- Shaking
- Hair loss
- Fast heartbeat
- Extreme tiredness or lack of energy
- Dizziness and fainting
- Stomach aches and sickness.



Help for Anxiety

Although feelings of anxiety at certain times are completely normal, see your GP if anxiety is affecting your daily life or causing you distress. There are also many things you can do yourself to help reduce your anxiety, such as:

- Going on a self-help course
- Exercising regularly
- Learning ways to relax such as listening to meditation CDs or relaxing music
- Eat healthy foods regularly
- Have enough sleep
- Keep a mood diary to be more aware of your symptoms and what makes you better and worse
- Reading books such as Ruby Wax 'How to be Human'
- Trying mental health apps such as Headspace, Calm or Insight Timer