

YOUR CARE POLMED

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More than being 'worried'



In SA, millions suffer from a mental health disorder.

Anxiety disorders are the most common. Anxiety is feelings of unease, worry, or fear.

While everyone experiences feelings of anxiety now and then, an anxiety disorder is when your anxiety worsens over time and the symptoms begin to interfere with your personal and professional life.

Generalized Anxiety Disorders (GAD) is the most common type of anxiety disorder.

GAD ■ Excessive and persistent worrying that begins to interfere with your personal and professional life.

The symptoms of GAD include:



Excessive, uncontrollable worry



Fatigue



Insomnia



Muscle Aches



Trembling



Sweating



Nausea



Hot flashes



Irritability



Agitation

Some of these symptoms may be a normal and appropriate response to the aftermath of a traumatic event – such as being a victim of crime, loss of a loved one or even the impact of a pandemic.

However, to be diagnosed as GAD or any other anxiety disorder, the symptoms must persist for two weeks, uninterrupted, after the external circumstances have eased or have shifted slightly.

Risk factors that increase your risk of developing GAD include:

- Women are twice as likely to be diagnosed with GAD
- A family history
- The risk is highest between childhood and middle-age
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Suffering from a chronic illness
- Depression
- Experiencing trauma or stressful events

PANIC DISORDER VS GAD

GAD is not to be confused with a panic disorder. While similar, these are two different conditions.

Panic disorder: You may be diagnosed with a panic disorder if you experience recurring and sudden panic attacks. Symptoms during a panic attack can include heart palpitations, excessive sweating, trembling and chest pain.

COULD I HAVE AN ANXIETY DISORDER?

Do the self-assessment below to determine if you may need help. Calculate your score by adding together the scores of each of the 4 different feelings.

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

	Not at all	Several days	More than half the days	Nearly every day
Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge	0	1	2	3
Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
Little interest or pleasure in doing things	0	1	2	3
Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless	0	1	2	3

SCORING

The final score ranges from 0-12. The scores are rated as:

- No risk: 0-2
- Mild risk: 3-5
- Moderate risk: 6-8
- Severe risk: 9-12

If your score is between 6 and 12, then you may need to speak to your doctor.

DANGERS OF UNMANAGED ANXIETY

If you feel that you may have GAD or any other anxiety disorder, it's important to seek out professional support. Unmanaged anxiety can increase your risk of:

- Depression
- Suicide
- Alcohol and drug abuse
- Heart attack

HOW TO MANAGE YOUR ANXIETY



Lifestyle

You can ease the symptoms of anxiety disorders on your own through lifestyle habits. These habits include:

- Exercising regularly
- Doing stress-relieving techniques such as yoga and breathing exercises
- Avoiding caffeine
- Avoiding alcohol and cigarettes
- Avoiding stressful situations
- Avoiding the use of illicit drugs



Psychotherapy

A doctor may also suggest psychotherapy to help you better manage your anxiety before resorting to medication.

Your mental health is important. If you feel that your feelings of anxiousness have become overwhelming, it's important to reach out to your doctor, who will offer the appropriate assistance, or direct you to someone who will.



Medication

A doctor may prescribe medication for your anxiety if your anxiety is extreme. This can include either anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medication.

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