



Anxiety

Everyone will experience anxiety at some point in their lives - it is an instinctive response that helps us recognise and respond to an imminent threat or danger.

However, many people with ADHD experience higher levels of anxiety on a regular basis because modern life is not really built for neurodivergent people and we can often find it hard to relax.

You may have difficulty falling asleep as your mind might be very busy or you may become overstimulated by day to day experiences. For ADHDers, daily anxiety often looks like:

- Racing thoughts
- Trouble starting tasks
- Decision paralysis
- Difficulty prioritising
- Tight chest or “buzzing” body
- Avoiding things that feel overwhelming
- Fearing you forgot something
- Feeling behind even when you’re not
- Forgetting items, tasks and appointments

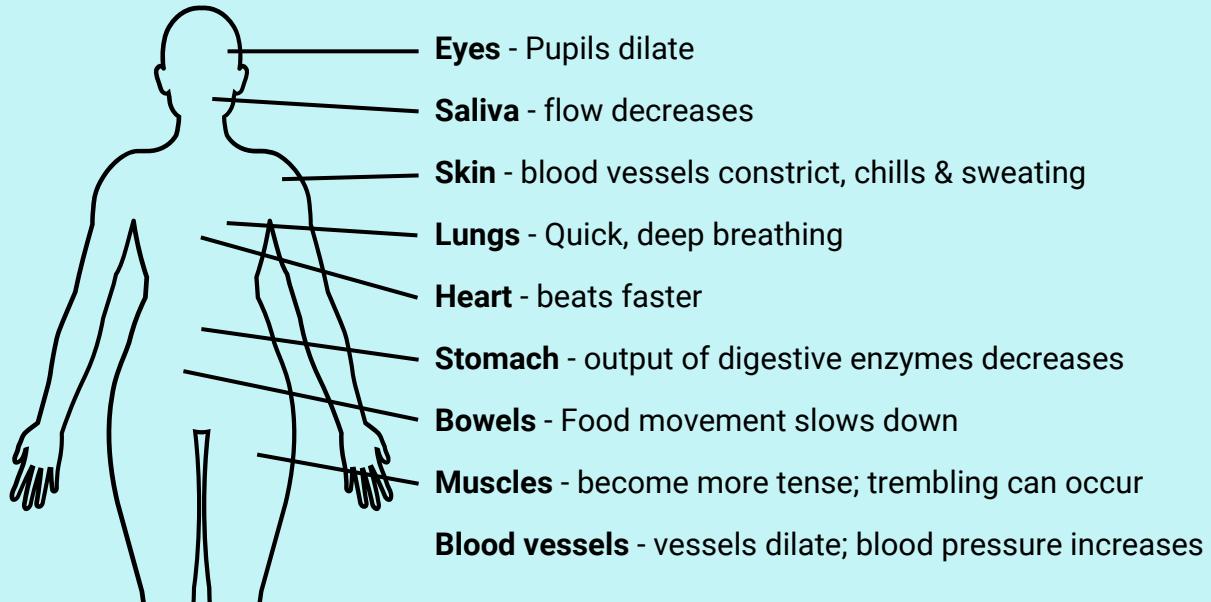
Just naming what's happening reduces its power. Try saying:

“This is anxiety, not danger. I am safe right now”



Symptoms of anxiety

Understanding the physical symptoms of anxiety can help to diffuse your fear and help you learn to manage it.



Top Tips for ADHD'ers to manage anxiety

It's important to develop strategies for regulating your emotions including anxiety.

Try:

- Checking in with yourself - is the environment you're in overstimulating ie: bright lights, loud, busy, stressful situation.
- Are you thirsty, hungry or tired? Try to carry a drink and a snack with you wherever you go. We often forget to eat and drink regularly and low blood sugar can make anxiety harder to manage.
- Put headphones on with a calming song or playlist. Music can be a real mood changer and making time to listen to favourite songs or creating playlists can be a really important tool for helping regulate your moods and distract yourself from anxiety.
- Weighted pressure can help - Lean on a wall, hug a pillow, use a weighted blanket or press your hands together.
- Massage yourself behind your ears.
- Drop your shoulders, unclench your jaw, move your body in gentle ways, feel your feet on the ground.
- Have a calming phrase that you repeat to yourself in difficult situations.
- Try eating a sour sweet or splashing your face with cold water.
- Take two short breaths in through your nose and one long exhale through your mouth and repeat this a few times.
- Spend time in nature, notice the clouds, birds, sensory sensations.
- Carry a fidget aid or comfort item with you and hold it in your hand.
- Self care activities such as a bath, a swim or a film night can help you feel rejuvenated.



- Dedicate time to activities you find relaxing like watching a favourite film or TV show, reading a book, favourite hobbies or playing a game.
- Spend time with pets, friends or loved ones.
- A warm drink or heating pad helps cue safety.
- Shake out your hands, stretch your shoulders, or walk for 2 minutes.

Remember you can learn strategies so that anxiety doesn't control you

Breaking the anxiety loop

ADHD brains can freeze when things feel vague, fast or huge. Here are some useful questions to help yourself to get back on track:

- What's bothering me right now?
- What tiny step could I take to help?
- What's the next step after that?

Example: "I'm anxious about this email. Tiny step: open the draft. Next step: write one sentence."

Small steps create momentum, and momentum reduces anxiety. When your mind spirals, try placing thoughts into one of these categories:

- Things I can control
- Things I can influence
- Things I can't control

Put your energy only into the first two categories. Acknowledge the third but try not to dwell on it.



Lessening day-to-day anxiety

Small ADHD-based habits prevent overwhelm:

- Use timers or reminders for transitions
- Keep routines simple and consistent
- Break tasks into micro-steps
- Find fidget items that work for you

Give yourself time between commitments, transition between tasks can be difficult for people with ADHD.

Try to lessen sensory overload where possible.

ADHD and anxiety often travel together - it's not a failure, it's a neurodevelopmental condition. Celebrate every little victory, even if it's just noticing "Hey, I'm anxious" or taking one deep breath. You're learning new tools, and that counts. Be proud of your progress.