

WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

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What Is Generalized Anxiety Disorder?

Feeling worried or anxious is a normal response to stressful situations. However, constant feelings of worry that disrupt your daily life may be a sign of a condition called generalized anxiety disorder (GAD).

What Are the Symptoms?

GAD is a common, disabling condition. People with GAD have trouble controlling their feelings of worry and have other symptoms that interfere with their daily life for at least 6 months, including:

- Restlessness or feeling “on edge”
- Tiring easily
- Muscle tension
- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Insomnia (trouble falling or staying asleep)

Am I at Risk?

GAD can happen to anyone but is more common in women. Anxiety disorders run in families, so having a family history of GAD can increase your risk. If you have another psychiatric disorder or a history of substance abuse or trauma, you may also be at increased risk for GAD.

How Is It Diagnosed?

- Your health care provider will ask questions about your symptoms and conduct an examination.
- He or she will rule out other medical conditions or mood disorders that could be causing your symptoms.
- Laboratory tests may be done to rule out other conditions that cause similar symptoms.

How Is It Treated?

Your health care provider will probably recommend you try nondrug treatments for GAD first, such as:

- A type of talk therapy called cognitive behavioral therapy can help to identify and



change unhelpful thoughts and behaviors to improve your quality of life.

- Relaxation techniques, like mindfulness meditation.
 - Lifestyle changes, like avoiding drugs, limiting alcohol intake, and exercising regularly.
- Drug treatments for GAD are available if nondrug treatments do not work.
- Several antidepressants work well for treatment of GAD.
 - You should use benzodiazepines only if you do not respond to other medicine and do not have a history of substance use disorder. They are habit forming and do not work in the long term.

You may need several weeks of treatment before you notice an improvement. Once your treatment starts to work, you should continue it for at least 6 to 12 months to avoid relapse.

Questions for My Doctor

- Are my feelings of worry excessive?
- How can I manage my symptoms?
- Do I need to see a therapist?
- Do I need to take medicine?
- What medicine is best for me?
- What are the side effects of the medicine?
- Are there support groups for me or my family?

For More Information



Anxiety and Depression Association of America

<https://adaa.org/understanding-anxiety/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad>

National Institute of Mental Health

www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/index.shtml