

Psychotherapy

A type of psychotherapy called cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is especially useful for treating GAD. CBT teaches a person different ways of thinking, behaving, and reacting to situations that help him or her feel less anxious and worried.

For more information on psychotherapies, visit:
www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/psychotherapies

Medication

Doctors may also prescribe medication:

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs)
- Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Other serotonergic medication
- Benzodiazepines

Doctors commonly use SSRIs and SNRIs to treat depression, but they are also helpful for the symptoms of GAD. They may take several weeks to start working. These medications may also cause side effects, such as headaches, nausea, or difficulty sleeping. These side effects are usually not severe for most people, esp. if the dose starts off low and is increased slowly over time.

For more information on medications, visit:
www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/mental-healthmedications

For more information on GAD and other mental illnesses, visit:
NAMI Flagstaff at www.namiflagstaff.org

NAMI Arizona at www.namiarizona.org

NAMI National at www.nami.org

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GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER

Occasional anxiety is a normal part of life. You might worry about things like health, money, or family problems. But people with generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) feel extremely worried or nervous about these and other things - even when there is little or no reason to worry about them. People with GAD find it difficult to control their anxiety and stay focused on daily tasks. The good news is that GAD is treatable. GAD develops slowly. It often starts during the teen years or young adulthood.

What it's like to have GAD

"I was worried all the time and felt nervous. My family told me that there were no signs of problems, but I still felt upset. I dreaded going to work because I couldn't keep my mind focused. I was having trouble falling asleep at night and was irritated at my family all the time. My doctor sent me to someone who knows about GAD. Now I am working with a counselor to cope better with my anxiety. ..."

What Causes GAD

GAD sometimes runs in families, but no one knows for sure why some family members have it while others don't. Researchers have found that several parts of the brain, as well as biological processes, play a key role in fear and anxiety.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GAD

People with GAD may...

- Have trouble controlling their worries or feelings of nervousness
- Know that they worry much more than they should
- Feel restless and have trouble relaxing
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Be easily startled
- Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Feel easily tired or tired all the time
- Have headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches, or unexplained pains
- Have a hard time swallowing
- Tremble or twitch
- Be irritable or feel “on edge”
- Sweat a lot, feel light-headed or out of breath
- Have to go to the bathroom a lot

Children and teens with GAD often worry excessively about their performance in school or in sports, their appearance or popularity and catastrophes, such as earthquakes or war.

Adults with GAD are often highly nervous about everyday circumstances, such as:

- Job security or performance
- Health and finances
- The health and well-being of their children
- Being late
- Completing household chores and other responsibilities
- Both children and adults may experience physical symptoms that make it hard to function and that interfere with daily life.
- Symptoms may get better or worse at different times, and they are often worse during times of stress, such as with a physical illness, during exams at school, or during a family or relationship conflict.

How is GAD treated

First, talk to your doctor about your symptoms. Your doctor should do an exam and ask you about your health history to make sure that an unrelated physical problem is not causing your symptoms. Be sure to update your doctor on medications you may have stopped or started without his/her knowledge. Be sure to include any over-the-counter remedies you may be taking. Your doctor may refer to you a mental health specialist, such as a psychiatrist or psychologist. GAD is generally treated with psychotherapy, medication, or both. Talk with your doctor about the best treatment for you.