



Generalized Anxiety Disorder



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What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)?

GAD is a type of anxiety disorder characterized by excessive, and often irrational worry about everyday matters such as job, the health of themselves and their family, finances, etc. This worry is often uncontrollable, thus causing a person to feel unable to wind down, and resulting in a variety of physical symptoms including fatigue, fidgeting, difficulty concentrating, irritability, insomnia, and so forth.

What are the Causes of GAD?

There is no single cause of GAD, but researchers have identified a number of risk factors. These factors differ for each individual person :

1. *Biological factors*

Heredity, chemical imbalances of neurotransmitters, poor physical health

2. *Psychological factors*

People who are anxiety-prone, insecure, pessimistic, and passive

3. *Environmental factors*

Negative childhood experiences, and other stressful events in life such as change of employment, relationship problems, etc.

How do I know if I have GAD?

It is normal to feel temporarily tense, anxious or worried when facing problems at work, and with friends and family. However, if your worries and fears persist for 6 months or above with 3 of the following symptoms exhibited, and become so constant that they interfere with your ability to work, socialize, and relax, you may have GAD.. You should seek help from health care professionals.

1. Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
2. Easily fatigued
3. Difficulty concentrating, or mind going blank
4. Irritability
5. Muscle tension
6. Sleep disturbance (difficulty falling asleep or restless sleep)

What is the course of GAD?

Many persons with GAD tend to have anxious personalities all along, indeed a portion of these people cannot precisely indicate when their disorder first emerged. The course of the disorder over time is related to the stressors experienced in life. Generally speaking, the longer one suffers from GAD, the longer it takes to recover. Apart from that, their chances of having depression or other anxiety disorders are also higher than that of the general population.

What are the Treatments for GAD?

1. Psychotherapy

Cognitive-behavioural therapy is an effective treatment for GAD. It attempts to replace maladaptive reactions in the domains of cognition, behaviour, and physiology, with adaptive coping responses. Cognitively, the main focus is on replacing irrational and catastrophic thoughts with more balanced ones; behaviourally, individuals would acquire skills in time management, goal setting, and problem-solving to help decrease anxiety; and physiologically, individuals would do relaxation exercises to decrease their stress reaction.

2. Pharmacological Treatment

To help alleviate symptoms of GAD, antidepressants, tranquillizers, or norepinephrine blockers can be taken if necessary. Individuals should take medication as prescribed by doctors to avoid addiction from the long-term use of tranquillizers and other side effects.

How can I help myself or others manage GAD?

For individuals with GAD

1. Actively seek treatment and participate in the process
2. Maintain a healthy lifestyle: eat a healthy and balanced diet, exercise regularly and moderately, cultivate meaningful hobbies, maintain social contacts Make a commitment to face your difficulties courageously
3. Do relaxation exercises regularly to relieve symptoms of anxiety

For family members of individuals with GAD

1. Understand of the symptoms of GAD and its causes. Avoid blaming the individual for developing GAD, and allow time for the individual to recover
2. Encourage the individual to actively participate in treatment and other recreational activities
3. Should conditions worsen, help from health care professionals should be sought as soon as possible.