

Understanding Generalised Anxiety Disorder

This material aims to provide you with a better understanding of what generalised anxiety disorder is and ways to manage the condition.

Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is a mental health condition characterised by excessive and uncontrollable worry about a wide range of everyday concerns. These worries often interfere with daily life and can cause significant distress.



Common Symptoms

Symptoms of GAD typically persist for nearly every day and may include:



Excessive Worrying

Persistent and excessive worry about a wide range of topics, including health, work, relationships and everyday responsibilities. Individuals may have difficulty concentrating too.



Physical Symptoms

These may include muscle tension, restlessness, fatigue, headaches, stomachaches and difficulty sleeping.



Emotional Symptoms

Feelings of irritability, restlessness, and a sense of something bad is about to happen are common emotional experiences for those with GAD.



Behavioural Symptoms

Avoiding stressful situations, seeking constant reassurance, and having difficulty making decisions are all common behaviours associated with GAD.

It is crucial to consult a mental health professional for an accurate diagnosis.

Causes and Risk Factors

A combination of factors can contribute to or heighten the risk of developing GAD. These include:

Genetic Factors

A family history of GAD may increase the likelihood of developing the condition.



Biological Factors

Brain chemistry and hormonal imbalances can play a role in the development of GAD.



Environmental Factors

Stressful life events, trauma, or chronic stress can contribute to the development of GAD.



Psychological Factors

Personality traits such as perfectionism, a tendency to be highly sensitive, or a history of childhood adversity can increase the risk of GAD.



It is important to note that GAD is a complex condition and may not have a single identifiable cause in every case. Consulting a mental health professional can help in understanding the specific factors that may be influencing an individual's experience of GAD.

Treatment Approaches for GAD

GAD can be effectively managed through various treatment approaches including:

Psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy is a collaborative process where a psychologist works with individuals in finding ways to improve their well-being.
- It involves talking with a trained psychologist in a safe and confidential setting.



Medications

- Antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications can help to manage symptoms. They are usually prescribed by a psychiatrist.
- It is important to note that medication also has possible side effects, hence it is important to discuss any concerns you have regarding medication with your healthcare provider.



Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about GAD

How is GAD different from normal worry?

Normal worry is a common and temporary response to stressors or uncertainties in life. It tends to be specific, time-limited and proportionate to the situation. In contrast, GAD involves excessive and persistent worry that is often out of proportion to the actual circumstances.

People with GAD experience chronic and pervasive anxiety that can significantly impact their daily life, even in the absence of an immediate stressor. This chronic worry can be exhausting and interfere with normal functioning and relationships.

Remember that you are not alone in this journey. By arming yourself with knowledge, seeking support and adopting coping strategies, you are taking powerful steps towards managing your condition. Remember, progress may be gradual, but every small step counts.

Contributed by Psychology (Allied Health Services)

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