

FACULTY AND STAFF ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

(305) 284-6604
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GENERALIZED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

What is GAD?

All of us worry about things like health, money, or family problems. But people with GAD are extremely worried about these and many other things, even when there is little or no reason to worry about them. They are very anxious about just getting through the day. They think things will always go badly. At times, worrying keeps people with GAD from doing everyday tasks.

GAD develops slowly. It often starts during the teen years or young adulthood. Symptoms may get better or worse at different times, and often are worse during times of stress.

People with GAD may visit a doctor many times before they find out they have this disorder. They ask their doctors to help them with headaches or trouble falling asleep, which can be symptoms of GAD, but they don't always get the help they need right away. It may take doctors some time to be sure that a person has GAD instead of something else.

What are the signs and symptoms of GAD?

A person with GAD may:

- Worry very much about everyday things
- Have trouble controlling their constant worries
- Know that they worry much more than they should
- Not be able to relax
- Have a hard time concentrating
- Be easily startled
- Have trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- Feel tired all the time
- Have headaches, muscle aches, stomach aches, or unexplained pains
- Have a hard time swallowing
- Tremble or twitch
- Be irritable, sweat a lot, and feel light-headed or out of breath
- Have to go to the bathroom a lot



What causes GAD?

GAD sometimes runs in families, but no one knows for sure why some people have it, while others don't. Researchers have found that several parts of the brain are involved in fear and anxiety. By learning more about fear and anxiety in the brain, scientists may be able to create better treatments. Researchers are also looking for ways in which stress and environmental factors may play a role.

What are the treatments for GAD?

Treatments are extremely effective and often combine medication or specific types of psychotherapy. More medications are available than ever before to effectively treat anxiety disorders. These include antidepressants (SSRIs, SNRIs, Tricyclic Antidepressants, MAOI's), tranquilizers (benzodiazepines, etc.) and in some cases, anticonvulsants. A person may have to try more than one medication before finding a drug or combination of drugs that works for them.

One of the most effective forms of psychotherapy used to treat anxiety disorders is cognitive-behavioral therapy. Cognitive-behavioral therapy teaches people to understand their thinking patterns so they can react differently to the situations that cause them anxiety.

If you find yourself struggling with anxiety symptoms, we can help. Schedule a free and confidential appointment to meet with a UM FSAP consultant by calling 305-284-6604.

Source: Mental Health Screening and National Institute of Mental Health