



Anxiety Resource Guide

Overviewⁱ

Generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, is a condition characterized by pervasive, unwarranted worry about a variety of everyday things—worrying too much about *everything*. In children the anxiety is often focused on performance in school or sports and may drive extreme studying or practicing.

Symptomsⁱ

- Worries incessantly about everything, but particularly over her own performance in school or other activities, or her ability to meet expectations
- Frequently seeks reassurance in an attempt to assuage her fears and worries
- Anxiety can make her rigid, irritable and restless
- Stress can lead to physical symptoms, including fatigue, stomachaches, and headaches
- Fears are exaggerated but they tend to focus on tangible, real-life issues
- Unlike adults, children with GAD may not recognize that their fears are outsized

Causesⁱ

Genes and environment are thought to play a role. Stressful and traumatic events could lead to onset, as can exposure to anxious behavior.

Treatmentsⁱⁱ

GAD is generally treated with psychotherapy, medication, or both.

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

Medication. Doctors also may prescribe medication to help treat GAD. Two types of medications are commonly used to treat GAD—anti-anxiety medications and antidepressants. Anti-anxiety medications are powerful and there are different types. Many types begin working right away, but they generally should not be taken for long periods.

Antidepressants are used to treat depression, but they also are helpful for GAD. They may take several weeks to start working. These medications may cause side effects such as headache, nausea, or difficulty sleeping. These side effects are usually not a problem for most people, especially if the dose starts off low and is increased slowly over time. *Talk to a doctor about any side effects your child may have.*



*Behavioral therapy*ⁱⁱⁱ: Behavioral therapy focuses on using specific relaxation techniques to change anxiety-causing behaviors.

ⁱ Child Mind Institute (2015). Quick Facts on Generalized Anxiety Disorder. <http://www.childmind.org/en/quick-facts-generalized-anxiety-disorder/>

ⁱⁱ National Institute of Mental Health (2015). Treatments. http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad/index.shtml#part_145367

ⁱⁱⁱ Mental Health America (2015). Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD). <http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/generalized-anxiety-disorder-gad>