Generalized anxiety disorder

Also called: GAD

Severe, ongoing anxiety that interferes with daily activities.

**Very common**

More than 3 million US cases per year

- Treatable by a medical professional
- Requires a medical diagnosis
- Lab tests or imaging not required
- Chronic: can last for years or be lifelong

Generalized anxiety disorder can occur at any age.

The condition has symptoms similar to panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and other types of anxiety. These symptoms include constant worry, restlessness, and trouble with concentration.

Treatment may include counseling and medications, such as antidepressants.

### Ages affected

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age range</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6-13</td>
<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td>14-18</td>
<td>40</td>
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<tr>
<td>19-40</td>
<td>50</td>
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<tr>
<td>41-60</td>
<td>5</td>
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<tr>
<td>60+</td>
<td>3</td>
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</table>

### Symptoms

**Requires a medical diagnosis**

The condition has symptoms similar to panic disorder, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and other types of anxiety. These symptoms include constant worry, restlessness, and trouble with concentration.
People may experience:

**Pain areas:** in the back

**Whole body:** fatigue, lightheadedness, or sweating

**Behavioral:** hypervigilance, irritability, or restlessness

**Psychological:** severe anxiety, fear, or repeatedly going over thoughts

**Cognitive:** lack of concentration or unwanted thoughts

**Also common:** emotional distress, excessive worry, difficulty falling asleep, headache, nausea, sensation of an abnormal heartbeat, or trembling

### Treatments

**Treatment consists of therapy**

Treatment may include counseling and medications, such as antidepressants.

### Medications

**Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitor (SSRI):** Eases symptoms of depressed mood and anxiety.

- Sertraline (Zoloft)
- Escitalopram (Lexapro)
- Citalopram (Celexa)
- Fluoxetine (Prozac and Sarafem)
- Paroxetine (Paxil, Pexeva, and Brisdelle)

**Anxiolytic:** Relieves anxiety and tension. May promote sleep.

- Buspirone

**Antidepressant:** Prevents or relieves depression and elevates mood.

- Venlafaxine (Effexor)
- Duloxetine (Cymbalta)

### Self-care

**Physical exercise:** Aerobic activity for 20-30 minutes 5 days a week improves cardiovascular health. If injured, pursuing an activity that avoids the injured muscle group or joint can help maintain physical function while recovering.

**Stress management:** Pursuing an enjoyable activity or verbalizing frustration to reduce stress and improve mental health.

**Relaxation techniques:** Deep breathing, meditation, yoga, rhythmic exercise, and other activities that reduce symptoms of stress
Therapies

**Mindfulness therapies:** The act of turning your attention internally to help manage physical and mental symptoms.

**Cognitive behavioral therapy:** A talk therapy focused on modifying negative thoughts, behaviors, and emotional responses associated with psychological distress.

**Mindfulness:** The act of turning your attention internally to help manage physical and mental symptoms.

**Psychoanalysis:** Uses psychotherapy to treat mental disorders.

**Psychotherapy:** Treatment of mental or behavioral disorders through talk therapy.

Specialists

**Psychiatrist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with medications.

**Pediatrician:** Provides medical care for infants, children, and teenagers.

**Primary care provider (PCP):** Prevents, diagnoses, and treats diseases.

**Geriatrician:** Focuses on the health care of elderly people.

**Clinical psychologist:** Treats mental disorders primarily with talk therapy.

Consult a doctor for medical advice

Note: The information you see describes what usually happens with a medical condition, but doesn't apply to everyone. This information isn't medical advice, so make sure to contact a healthcare provider if you have a medical problem. If you think you may have a medical emergency, call your doctor or an emergency number immediately.

**Sources:** Mayo Clinic and others. Learn more