



Generalized Anxiety Disorder

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by constant worry about aspects of daily life. Children and teens with GAD worry about danger, failure, uncertainty, disappointment, illness and certainty. They may often feel tired, restless, tense, or irritable. They may have trouble concentrating or sleeping.

Who gets Generalized Anxiety Disorder?

GAD runs in families, meaning that it can be linked to genetics.

GAD may occur in kids who have been anxious or cautious since early childhood.

Trauma, stress, and parental overprotection are risk factors for GAD.

GAD occurs in 3-4% of children and teenagers, and is about 2 times as common in females than males.

How can my parent help me?

My parent can help me create structure and predictability in my life. We can build daily routines that include family time, regular meals, and regular sleep and wake times.

Model stress management. Kids learn from the way their parents manage problems, uncertainty, and disappointment. Parents don't have to be perfect, but they can show that problems can be worked through, uncertainty can be managed and disappointment can be survived.



Scan for additional resources for GAD

How can I help myself?

Learn about anxiety and how it affects your life. Check out the QR code below for resources.

Practice healthy habits!



Set a regular bedtime and get at least 8 hours of sleep. Build an exercise routine – a little exercise every day reduces anxiety. Aim for regular, healthy meals and reduce caffeine.

Get centered!



When you are anxious, your thoughts run to the future and the past in unhelpful ways. Mindfulness and medication can help you settle your mind in the present and turn off anxious thoughts.

How can a professional help me?

GAD is treatable. Effective treatment includes psychotherapy and medications. **Cognitive behavior therapy (CBT)** focuses on identifying and reframing negative thoughts and can be helpful for GAD. Mindfulness strategies may also be effective.

Therapy is often combined with medication, usually **Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRIs)**. Although SSRIs are called antidepressants, they are effective treatment for anxiety disorders as well.