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## Generalized Anxiety Disorder: What You Should Know

### What is generalized anxiety disorder?

Anxiety is a word that describes feelings of worry, nervousness, fear, apprehension, concern or restlessness. Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is ongoing anxiety that isn't related to a particular event or situation, or is out of proportion to what you would expect. For instance, a person who has GAD may constantly worry about a child who is perfectly healthy.

About 4 million adults in the United States have GAD. Women are more likely to have it than men. It usually begins to affect people when they are in their early 20s.

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### How do I know if I have GAD?

Most people worry from time to time, and these occasional worries are normal. They don't mean that you have GAD. If you have GAD, you worry so much that it interferes with your day-to-day life, and you feel tense and worried more days than not. Other signs of GAD include the following:

- Trouble falling or staying asleep
- Muscle tension
- Irritability
- Trouble concentrating
- Getting tired easily
- Restlessness, or feeling "keyed up" or on edge

If you feel tense most of the time and have some of these symptoms, talk to your doctor. Your doctor will probably examine you and ask some questions to make sure that something else isn't causing your symptoms. Sometimes certain kinds of medicine may cause GAD. You could also have these symptoms if your thyroid gland is too active, or if you are depressed. However, if your doctor doesn't find any other reason for your symptoms, you may need to be treated for GAD.

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### How is GAD treated?

People who have GAD must learn ways to cope with anxiety and worry. You'll probably need some counseling to help you figure out what's making you so tense. Also, you may need to take some medicine to help you feel less anxious. Your doctor can recommend the treatment that is right for you.

People who have GAD can get better. If you take medicine for generalized anxiety disorder, you may be able to stop taking it at some point in the future. Your doctor will tell you if it's OK to stop taking your medicine.

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## Other Organizations

- [Anxiety Disorders Education Program](#)  
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>

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