

The Symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder

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Given the stresses of modern life, it is normal to experience occasional anxiety. However, people with generalized anxiety disorder, or GAD, suffer from persistent worry and tension that is much worse than the anxiety most people experience from time to time. The high level or chronic state of anxiety associated with GAD can make ordinary activities difficult or even impossible.

The main symptom of GAD is an exaggerated or unfounded state of worry and anxiety, often about such matters as health, money, family, or work. Although people with GAD may realize that their anxiety is excessive or unwarranted, they are unable to simply "snap out of it" for them, the mere thought of getting through the day can provoke anxiety.

The persistent worry characteristic of GAD is hard to control, and interferes with daily life. Many GAD sufferers seem unable to relax, and may startle easily. In addition, GAD is often accompanied by physical symptoms, such as fatigue, headaches, and muscle tension.

GAD does not appear suddenly; it develops over time. To be diagnosed with GAD, you must have had anxiety more days than not for at least 6 months. The anxiety must also be associated with at least 3 of the following symptoms:

• Restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge

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• Fatigue

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• Difficulty concentrating or mind going blank

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• Irritability

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• Muscle tension

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• Difficulty falling or staying asleep, or restless unsatisfying sleep

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Symptoms will vary from person to person, and you don't need to have all the above symptoms in order to have GAD.