

## **Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)**

**Definition:** Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by persistent, extensive, and unrealistic worry about everyday things. People with GAD experience exaggerated worry and tension, usually expecting the worst, even when there is no apparent reason for concern. Generalized Anxiety Disorder is diagnosed when a person worries excessively about a variety of everyday things for at least 6 months.

**Symptoms:** People with GAD worry constantly about everyday things such as health, family, money or work. This worry can go on every day, possibly all day. It disrupts social activity and interferes with work, family, and school. There may be physical symptoms with GAD which may include:

- Muscle tension
- Restlessness
- Fatigue
- Difficulty sleeping
- Irritability
- Edginess
- Gastrointestinal discomfort

The disorder comes on gradually, but the risk is highest between childhood and middle age.

**Causes:** Although the exact cause of GAD is unknown, there is evidence that biological factors, family background, and life experiences (especially stressful ones) play a part.

**Treatment:** Generalized Anxiety Disorder is treatable with Cognitive-Behavioral therapy (CBT) which helps people identify, understand and modify their thinking and behavior patterns. This helps people with GAD control their worry. Some people also take medication. GAD rarely occurs alone; other conditions must also be treated with appropriate therapies.