



"Psychology Works" Fact Sheet: Generalized Anxiety Disorder

What is generalized anxiety disorder (GAD)?

If you have Generalized Anxiety Disorder you will experience chronic, excessive, and uncontrollable worry. You may also be on edge, be easily fatigued, have difficulty concentrating, feel irritable, experience muscle tension, and have problems sleeping.

GAD is one of the most common anxiety disorders. Canadian data suggest that one out of every 12 individuals will suffer from GAD at some time in their life. It can be mild or it can contribute to unemployment and serious family and social problems.

GAD can lead to other problems such as fear of meeting people (social anxiety disorder), severe panic attacks (panic disorder), and depression. If left untreated, those with GAD are at greater risk of developing medical problems such as heart disease, diabetes, and cancer.

Proven psychological approaches to treat GAD

There are a number of proven psychological therapies for GAD. They will help you gain control over your worries, decrease your anxiety, and improve your quality of life. The therapies that have been shown to be most helpful are:

- cognitive re-evaluation to help you correct thinking patterns that increase worry;
- behavioural experiments to help you cope with uncertainty;
- imaginal exposure to help you confront rather than avoid your fears;
- problem-solving training to help you learn better ways to solve everyday problems; and
- progressive relaxation to decrease your physical symptoms of anxiety such as rapid breathing and sore muscles.

Research shows that psychological treatments are effective in treating GAD

Psychological therapy is very effective in the treatment of GAD. In a Canadian study, 77% of those receiving short-term psychotherapy (16 sessions of cognitive re-evaluation, problem-solving training, and exposure) remained GAD-free one year after treatment.

The fact that you get better and stay better after psychological therapy is certainly an important consideration for those seeking help for anxiety-related problems.





Where do I go for more information?

For more information visit the following website:

- Anxiety Canada at <http://www.anxietycanada.ca>

You can consult with a registered psychologist to find out if psychological interventions might be of help to you. Provincial, territorial and some municipal associations of psychology often maintain referral services. For the names and coordinates of provincial and territorial associations of psychology, go to <https://cpa.ca/public/whatisapsychologist/ptassociations/>.

This fact sheet has been prepared for the Canadian Psychological Association by Dr. Michel J. Dugas, Université du Québec en Outaouais.

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Your opinion matters! Please contact us with any questions or comments about any of the *Psychology Works* Fact Sheets: factsheets@cpa.ca

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