

ANXIETY

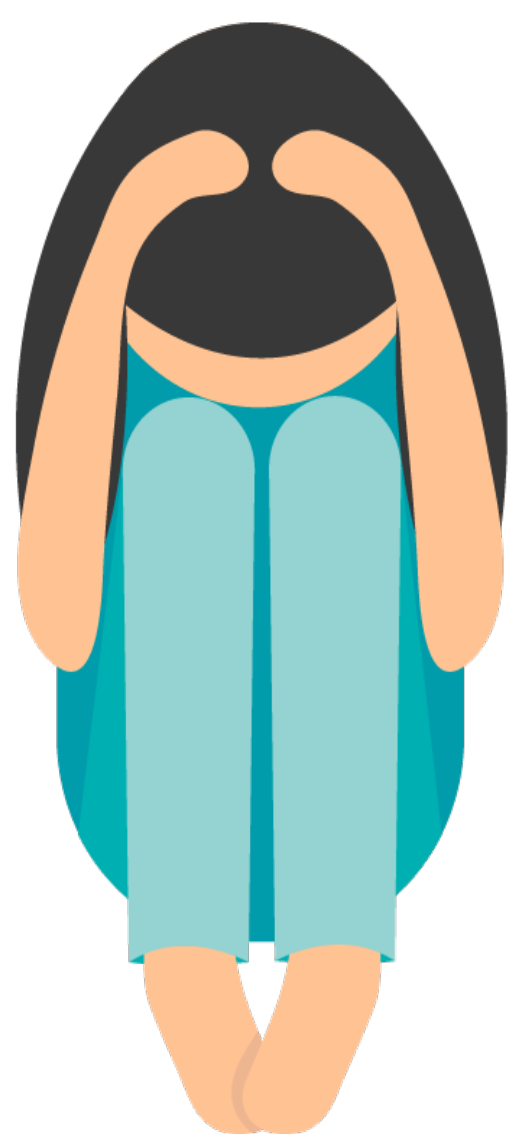
WHAT IS ANXIETY?

Most people feel anxious or worried from time to time. This is normal especially when there are various stress factors (stressor) at work or at home. However, if the anxiety continues, it can become hard to control and may significantly interfere with a person's daily life. This is known as Generalised Anxiety Disorder (GAD), and at this point, it may become a condition that needs further assessment.

SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF GENERALISED ANXIETY DISORDER (GAD)

Symptoms of GAD may include:

- A constant sense of worry or excessive anxiety that is out of proportion to the stressor, or even when there is no stressor
- Restlessness
- Feeling fatigued (tired)
- Difficulty in concentrating on a task
- Feeling irritable
- Increased frequency/intensity of muscle tension or muscle aches
- Difficulty sleeping



WHO ARE AT RISK OF GAD?

Generalised Anxiety Disorder affects almost 1 in 50 people at some stage in life. Women are twice as likely to be affected as men. It may occur at any age and can affect both the young and the old.

WHAT ARE THE RISK FACTORS?

The cause of GAD is likely due to a combination of:



Genetics



Brain chemistry



Different life experiences



Personality

Major life stress factors may also trigger the onset of GAD, and the symptoms may continue even after the cause/trigger is gone.

HOW TO MANAGE GAD?

The two main treatment options are talking treatment (therapy) and medications. Treatment needs vary from one person to another.

Examples of talking treatment (therapy) include:

- Counselling
- Anxiety management such as relaxation exercises and coping skills
- Cognitive Behaviour Therapy – this helps you to think and behave in more positive and helpful ways

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Anti-depressant medications are effective in treating patients with GAD. Some of the most common anti-depressants used to treat GAD include:

- Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors (SSRI)
- Serotonin-Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Tricyclic Antidepressants (TCAs)



Sedative medications such as benzodiazepines may also be added for short-term use, but these are addictive and can lose their effect if they are taken for more than a few weeks.

For some people, a combination of therapy and medications may work better than either treatment alone.

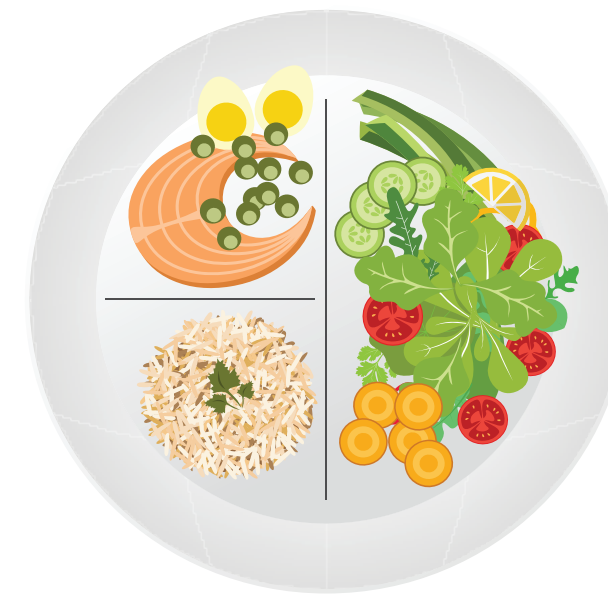
Lifestyle changes which can help manage the symptoms of GAD include:



Regular exercise



Having sufficient sleep



Eating a healthy diet



Increasing social activities



Avoiding alcohol and recreational drugs



Stop smoking



Reducing intake of caffeinated drinks such as coffee



Using relaxation techniques such as meditation or yoga



If you think you are experiencing these symptoms, it is best to approach a mental health professional to find out what treatment is available and best suited for you.



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