

Facts about addiction and generalized anxiety disorder

People with alcohol and other drug dependencies often suffer from co-occurring mental health illnesses.

Mental health and recovery

Individuals with untreated mental health issues may experience more difficulty in recovery.

For some people alcohol and drug use and withdrawal can cause symptoms of anxiety. In these cases the anxiety symptoms may be substance induced and the symptoms will subside with prolonged abstinence. For others the symptoms of anxiety persist and may even worsen with prolonged abstinence thus making recovery more difficult. For these individuals, treatment options are available.

What is Generalized Anxiety Disorder?

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) is characterized by six months or more of chronic, exaggerated worrying that is fear-based and is much more severe than the normal anxiety most people experience.

People with this disorder usually expect the worst. They worry excessively about money, health, family, or work, even when there are no signs of trouble. They have difficulty relaxing and may suffer from insomnia. Many people with GAD also have physical symptoms, such as fatigue, trembling, muscle tension, headaches, irritability, or hot flashes.¹

For some, simply the thought of getting through the day provokes anxiety. People with GAD have difficulty letting go of their concerns, even though they might realize that their anxiety is more intense than the situation warrants. They may startle more easily than other people and tend to have difficulty concentrating.

How common is GAD?

About 2.8% of the adult US population ages 18 to 54 (approximately four million)

Americans have GAD. Generalized Anxiety Disorder symptoms most often begin in childhood or adolescence, but can also begin in adulthood. It affects more women than men.^{2, 3}

What causes GAD?

Some research suggests that GAD is hereditary and may run in families. It may also grow worse during times of stress. GAD usually begins at an earlier age and symptoms may happen more slowly than in other types of anxiety disorders.^{2, 3}

What treatments are available for GAD?

Treatments for GAD include cognitive behavioral therapy and medication. It is important to discuss medication options with a professional with knowledge about substance abuse and dependency, because some medications may be addictive.

About Mental Health Services

Mental health services at Hazelden are part of the internationally recognized Hazelden Foundation. Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. Built on decades of knowledge and experience, Hazelden's comprehensive approach to addiction addresses the full range of patient, family, and professional needs, including treatment and continuing care for youth and adults, research, higher learning, public education and advocacy, and publishing.

For more information about mental health services at Hazelden, please call 800-257-7800.

hazelden.org

800-257-7800

We invite you to call us with questions.

We are available 24 hours a day.

References

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3. Hyman SE, Rudorfer MV. Anxiety disorders. In: Dale DC, Federman DD, eds. Scientific American® Medicine. Volume 3. New York: Healthon/WebMD Cork., 2000, Sect. 13, Subsect. VIII.