

Generalized Anxiety Disorder in Teens: Care Instructions



Overview

We all worry. It's a normal part of life. But when you have generalized anxiety disorder, you worry about lots of things. You have a hard time not worrying. This worry or anxiety interferes with your relationships, work or school, and other areas of your life.

You may worry most days about things like money, health, work, or friends. That may make you feel tired, tense, or cranky. It can make it hard to think. It may get in the way of healthy sleep.

Counseling and medicine can both work to treat anxiety. They are often used together with lifestyle changes, such as getting enough sleep. Treatment can include a type of counseling called cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT. It helps you notice and replace thoughts that make you worry. You also might have counseling along with those closest to you so that they can help.

Follow-up care is a key part of your treatment and safety. Be sure to make and go to all appointments, and call your doctor if you are having problems. It's also a good idea to know your test results and keep a list of the medicines you take.

How can you care for yourself at home?

- Get at least 30 minutes of exercise on most days of the week. Walking is a good choice. You also may want to do other activities, such as running, swimming, cycling, or playing tennis or team sports.
- Learn and do relaxation exercises, such as deep breathing.
- Go to bed at the same time every night. Try for 8 to 10 hours of sleep a night.
- Avoid alcohol, marijuana, and illegal drugs.
- Find a counselor who uses cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT).
- Don't isolate yourself. Let those closest to you help you. Find someone you can trust and confide in. Talk to that person.
- Be safe with medicines. Take your medicines exactly as prescribed. Call your doctor if you think you are having a problem with your medicine.
- Practice healthy thinking. How you think can affect how you feel and act. Ask yourself if your thoughts are helpful or unhelpful. If they are unhelpful, you can learn how to change them.
- Recognize and accept your anxiety. When you feel anxious, say to yourself, "This is not an emergency. I feel uncomfortable, but I am not in danger. I can keep going even if I feel anxious."

When should you call for help?

Call anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You feel you can't stop from hurting yourself or someone else.

Where to get help 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

If you or someone you know talks about suicide, self-harm, a mental health crisis, a substance use crisis, or any other kind of emotional distress, get help right away. You can:

- Call the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline at **988**.
- Call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.
- Text **HOME** to **741741** to access the Crisis Text Line.

Consider saving these numbers in your phone.

Go to **988lifeline.org** for more information or to chat online.

Call your doctor or counselor now or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have new anxiety, or your anxiety gets worse.
- You have been feeling sad, depressed, or hopeless or have lost interest in things that you usually enjoy.
- You do not get better as expected.

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