

The GAD-7 is a simple, valid tool for assessing Generalized Anxiety Disorder

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Generalized anxiety is one of the most common mental health disorders seen in primary care. Patients with GAD, Generalized Anxiety Disorder, have persistent, excessive, and uncontrolled worry and anxiety about daily life and routine activities. Diagnosis, using the DSM-IV, is based on all of the following:

- Excessive and uncontrolled anxiety and worry - more days than not for 6 months
- At least 3 of the following symptoms:
 - Restlessness
 - Irritability
 - Sleep disturbances
 - Fatigue
 - Difficulty concentrating
 - Muscle tension
- Anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms that cause clinically significant distress or functional impairment
- Symptoms that are not the result of substance or medication use or abuse, or a general medical condition

The **GAD -7** is a tool to assess for anxiety similar to the PHQ-9 for depression, including use of the first 2 questions for screening. The **GAD-7** can be administered by a clinician or completed by the patient. The responses to the seven questions are constructed on a 3-point scale from "Not at all" to "Nearly every day" and the survey is scored on a 0 to 21 point scale. A score of 5-9 indicates mild anxiety, 10-14 indicates moderate anxiety, and 15 or more indicates severe anxiety. Active treatment with medication and/or psychotherapy is recommended for severe anxiety, while psychotherapy is recommended as first line treatment for moderate anxiety.

The **GAD-7** was studied with a total of 2,740 patients in 2004 to 2005 in 15 primary care sites in the United States and was determined to have good reliability, validity and the ability to assess severity of anxiety symptoms in the patients surveyed.¹ Eighty-nine percent (89%) of patients with GAD (as determined by interviews with mental health professionals) had a **GAD-7** score of 10 or greater and the **GAD-7** severity score was correlated with worsening Health-Related Quality of Life scores. The **GAD-7**, like the PHQ-9, may be useful in assessing symptom severity and monitoring changes over time, though the responsiveness to change over time remains to be tested in treatment studies.

GAD-7 Score	Symptoms	Treatment Recommendations
5-9	Mild	Watchful waiting
10-14	Moderate	Psychotherapy – first line of treatment
≥15	Severe	Medication and/or psychotherapy

Generalized Anxiety Disorder 7-item (GAD-7) scale

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all sure	Several days	Over half the days	Nearly every day
1. Feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge	0	1	2	3
2. Not being able to stop or control worrying	0	1	2	3
3. Worrying too much about different things	0	1	2	3
4. Trouble relaxing	0	1	2	3
5. Being so restless that it's hard to sit still	0	1	2	3
6. Becoming easily annoyed or irritable	0	1	2	3
7. Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen	0	1	2	3
<i>Add the score for each column</i>	+	+	+	
Total Score (<i>add your column scores</i>) =				

1. Spitzer RL, Kroenke K, Williams JBW, Lowe B. A Brief Measure for Assessing Generalized Anxiety Disorder, *Arch Intern Med.* 2006;166:1092-1097.