

Diagnosis of GAD

- 1 This disorder is defined by an extended period of excessive anxiety and worry, which extends at least six months.
- 2 The patient cannot control the worry.
- 3 The worry is associated with 3 of the following symptoms:
 - a restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
 - b being easily fatigued
 - c difficulty concentrating/mind going blank
 - d irritability
 - e muscle tension
 - f sleep disturbance
- 4 The worry is not associated with another psychiatric illness.
- 5 The anxiety, worry, or physical symptoms cause significant distress and/or impairment in social, occupational, or other functioning.
- 6 The worry is not due to the effects of a substance, medication, or medical condition, and does not occur as a result of another psychiatric disorder.

Source: American Psychiatric Association (1994). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder, Fourth Edition*.

Mnemonic for GAD: MR. FISC

- M = Muscle tension
- R = Restlessness
- F = Fatigue
- I = Irritability
- S = Sleep
- C = Concentration (difficulty concentrating)

Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD)

A Guide for Physicians



Presentation of GAD

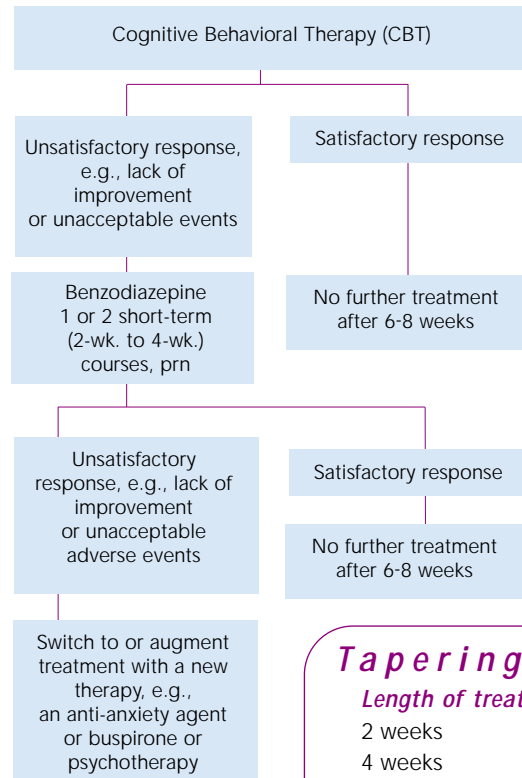
- ☑ Multiple medical visits
- ☑ Multiple unexplained symptoms
- ☑ Work/relationship dysfunction
- ☑ Unexplained fatigue
- ☑ Weight gain or loss
- ☑ Sleep disturbance
- ☑ Multiple worries or distress
- ☑ Medically unexplained symptoms of autonomic excitation:
 - a cardiac (chest pain, palpitations, dyspnea)
 - b gastrointestinal (especially epigastric distress, irritable bowel syndrome)
 - c neurologic (headache, dizziness, paresthesias)
 - d panic
 - e respiratory (hyperventilation)
- ☑ Emergency room visits for unexplained somatic symptoms
- ☑ Unexplained pain

Interview Questions

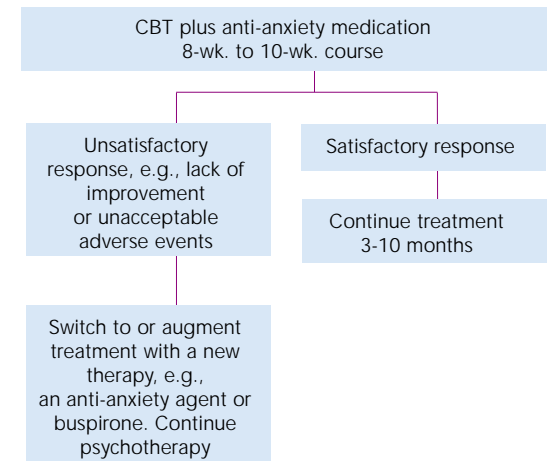
- 1 Are you a worrier?
- 2 Are you high-strung or nervous person?
- 3 Do you ever "out of the blue" experience an attack of intense fear or losing control, dying, fainting, "going crazy", or severe embarrassment?
- 4 Are there places (such as church, malls, crowds) that you avoid or endure?
- 5 Are these situations (parties, meetings, classes) that you avoid or endure?
- 6 How do your symptoms affect your daily life?

Treatment Plan

Algorithm A. Sub-Threshold GAD Symptoms With a Short Duration (<6 months)



Algorithm B. Full-Threshold, Chronic, DSM-IV GAD



Tapering Benzodiazepines

Length of treatment	Length of taper
2 weeks	0-2 days
4 weeks	0-2 weeks
8 weeks	2-3 weeks
6 months	4-8 weeks
12+ months	2-4 months

Generic (Trade) Name	Starting Dose (mg/day)	Usual Adult Dose (mg/day)	Dose Reduction in Older Adults?
Selective Serotonin Reuptake Inhibitors			
paroxetine (Paxil)	10-20mg	20-50mg	Yes
sertaline (Zoloft)	25-50mg	50-200mg	No
fluvoxamine (Luvox)	50mg	100-300mg	Yes
Serotonin/Norepinephrine Reuptake Inhibitors			
venlafaxine XR (Effexor)	37.5-75mg	75-225mg	No
Non-benzodiazepine anxiolytics			
buspirone (BuSpar)	7.5-15mg	20-60mg	No
Benzodiazepine anxiolytics (short half-life)			
alprazolam (Xanax)	0.25-0.5mg	0.5-2mg	Yes
lorazepam (Ativan)	0.5-1mg	1-4mg	Yes
Benzodiazepine anxiolytics (long half-life)			
diazepam (Valium)	2mg	2-10mg	Yes
clorazepate (Tranxene)	3.75-7mg	7-15mg	Yes
chlordiazepoxide (Librium)	10-30mg	15-100mg	Yes