Generalised anxiety: GP information sheet

Generalised anxiety involves worry that can feel hard to switch off, often about many everyday things at once. Everyone worries sometimes; for some people, worry may start to take up a lot of space in daily life. It is common, and support is available.

About this sheet. We have written this sheet as psychologists, in the hope that GPs may find some of it useful. It offers general information only and is not a clinical tool.

How it may show up in everyday life

Some people, or the people close to them, may notice things like these. They can look quite different from one person to the next.

Worry

- Worries might jump from one topic to the next
- Thoughts may run to what could go wrong
- Switching off could feel hard

In the body

- Muscles might feel tense
- Tiredness could linger
- Some people may notice headaches or an unsettled stomach

Sleep

- Getting to sleep might take a while
- Minds may feel busy at night
- Rest could feel unrefreshing

At work or study

- Concentration might drift
- Tasks may be put off
- Reassurance could feel comforting

In relationships

- People might seek reassurance often
- Plans may feel stressful
- Loved ones may notice tension

Different for everyone

- Some may describe feeling on edge
- Some may notice irritability
- Experiences can change with stress

What the person might be bringing

People may have been living with worry for a long time and wonder whether it is just who they are. They might feel tired, or a little embarrassed about how much they worry.

A warm, curious conversation may help it feel safer to talk. Feeling heard can be a meaningful first step.

What GPs already do well

Opening gently

GPs are often the first person someone feels able to talk to. A gentle opening can help people share things they may not have said out loud before.

Listening to the story

GPs often know the person, and sometimes their family, over many years. That wider view of someone's life can be very valuable.

A steady point of contact

As people explore their options, the GP can remain a familiar, steady presence, working alongside other professionals.

Seeing the whole person

GPs often hold the bigger picture of someone's health and wellbeing, which can help people feel understood.

What psychology may offer

Understanding

- Time to make sense of worry
- Exploring thoughts and feelings at a comfortable pace
- Recognising strengths as well as challenges
- A safe space to talk

Practical support

- Ideas for managing worry
- Relaxation and calming skills
- Online programs, where they suit
- Working alongside the GP and other professionals

Everyday things some people find helpful

These are simply possibilities. What helps one person may not suit another.

- Slow breathing
- Regular movement
- Less caffeine later in the day
- A short daily wind down
- Writing worries down
- Time in nature

Trusted Australian resources

Beyond Blue beyondblue.org.au

THIS WAY UP thiswayup.org.au

MindSpot mindspot.org.au

Referring to Strategic Psychology

Our psychologists work with children, adolescents and adults. If a client would like to see one of our team, they can call us on 02 6262 6157 or visit strategicpsychology.com.au. Medicare rebates may be available with a GP referral.

This sheet offers general information for GPs to consider. It does not replace clinical judgement.