

# Screening for Generalized Anxiety Disorder

## Did you know?

Regular anxiety screenings can help identify symptoms that go beyond what is considered normal, creating opportunities for timely treatment.

Generalized anxiety disorder (GAD) is a mental health disorder characterized by persistent anxiety and worries for at least six months, causing significant impairment in daily functioning.



*Important: GAD is not a normal part of aging, nor is it a normal part of living in a nursing home.*



## To Screen for GAD:

1. Conduct a brief interview with the resident to understand their anxiety symptoms, the sources of their worries, and the impact on their daily functioning.
2. Use the *Generalized Anxiety Disorder-7 (GAD-7)* screening tool to actually measure the severity of the anxiety. Severity levels will range from minimal to severe.

## Interpreting Results:

- ▶ The interview, along with the GAD-7 results, will guide the clinical decision to determine if a resident is positive for GAD.
- ▶ A score of 5 or higher on the GAD-7 indicates presence of anxiety symptoms.
- ▶ Note, a positive screening result does not confirm that the resident has GAD; it indicates that the resident may have GAD-like symptoms that require further evaluation.

## Next Steps After a Positive Screen:

1. Share the screening results with the resident.
2. Reassure the resident that further evaluation is a standard next step.
3. Share the screening results with the interdisciplinary team and healthcare provider, including any observations from the brief interview.
4. Refer the resident to a healthcare provider for a comprehensive evaluation to rule out other conditions that may present with similar symptoms, such as thyroid disorders, steroid-induced anxiety, or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).
5. If medical conditions are ruled out, the provider should diagnose the specific anxiety disorder and collaborate with the resident to create a person-centered care plan.

**Pro Tip:** Incorporate GAD screening into your regular assessment routine. This simple, consistent action can have a significant impact on the well-being of residents.