

# Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD)

## About the GAD

### What does it measure?

The Generalized Anxiety Disorder Scale (GAD) is a brief self-report instrument that measures symptoms of Generalized Anxiety Disorder. It is used as a screening instrument or measure of symptom severity during treatment.

There are two versions of the GAD: GAD-2 and GAD-7. The GAD-2 is a brief measure of anxiety that is typically used in primary care settings to screen for anxiety when time is limited. It is recommended to administer the full GAD-7 if a patient endorses the two items on the GAD-2.

### Availability

The GAD-2 and GAD-7 are available in the public domain, with no permissions required for use or distribution. The GAD measures were developed by Drs. Robert L. Spitzer, Janet B.W. Williams, and Kurt Kroenke and colleagues with the support of an educational grant from Pfizer Inc. Both versions of the GAD are included in the battery of measures available within the Behavior Health Data Portal (BHDP). The BHDP is a software platform used to measure and examine patient-level clinical outcomes in military behavioral health clinics.

GAD-7				
Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?	Not at all	Several days	More than 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 is 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

Total Score = Add Columns + + + +

If you checked off any problems, how difficult have these problems made it for you to do your work, take care of things at home, or get along with other people?

Not difficult at all	Somewhat difficult	Very difficult	Extremely difficult
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

## Scoring the GAD

### What is the scoring range?

The GAD-7 consists of seven questions. Each item is measured on a four-point Likert scale from 0, indicating the least difficulty, to 3, indicating the most difficulty. The overall range for the measure is 0-21 for the total score. The score is calculated by assigning scores of 0, 1, 2, or 3, to the response categories of “not at all,” “several days,” “more than half the days,” and “nearly every day,” respectively, and adding together the scores for the seven questions.

The GAD-2 consists of the first two items of the GAD-7 and has a range of 0-6.

### What are the clinical cutoffs, if any?

The following scores represent the clinical cutoffs for GAD-7:

GAD-7 Score Ranges	Interpretation
0-4	Not Clinically Significant
5-9	Mild
10-14	Moderate
15-21	Severe

## How should a provider interpret results?

When used as a screening tool, further evaluation is recommended for a GAD-7 score of 10 or more, which indicates a possible diagnosis of the disorder. Using the threshold score of 10, the GAD-7 has a sensitivity of 89% and a specificity of 82% for the disorder. It is moderately good at screening three other common anxiety disorders: panic disorder (sensitivity 74%, specificity 81%), social anxiety disorder (sensitivity 72%, specificity 80%), and post-traumatic stress disorder (sensitivity 66%, specificity 81%).

## *Using the GAD in Practice*

### How should providers use the results in treatment planning?

Since the GAD-7 reflects severity, the score can be used to assess the probability that a patient has GAD or another anxiety disorder. As a result, the GAD-7 can facilitate diagnosis and guide appropriate therapeutic intervention. It can be used by providers to measure patients' self-reported symptoms before and after treatment, as it can be administered throughout the course of treatment to assess change and progress over time.

## References

- Kroenke, K., Spitzer, R. L., Williams, J. W., Monahan, P. O., & Lowe, B. (2007). Anxiety disorders in primary care: Prevalence, impairment, comorbidity, and detection. *Annals of Internal Medicine*, *146*(5), 317-325. doi: [10.7326/0003-4819-146-5-200703060-00004](https://doi.org/10.7326/0003-4819-146-5-200703060-00004).
- Sapra, A., Bhandari, P., Sharma, S., Chanpura, T., & Lopp, L. (2020). Using generalized anxiety disorder-2 (GAD-2) and GAD-7 in a primary care setting. *Cureus*, *12*(5), e8224. <https://doi.org/10.7759/cureus.8224>
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