Quality Approved Resource

NHS
Cumbria, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear
NHS Foundation Trust

Health Anxiety

Easy read information

A member of staff or a carer can support you to read this booklet. They will be able to answer any questions that you have.

About this leaflet

If you worry about your health a lot you may suffer from health anxiety. This leaflet is for people who suffer from health anxiety.

What is health anxiety?

If you worry about your health a lot, it can make you feel even more poorly. You might think you have something seriously wrong with you, when really there is nothing wrong.

People who worry about their health see their doctor lots of times. When the doctor tells them they are ok, they feel better at first but this doesn't last for very long.

Is it normal to worry about health?

Everyone worries about their health at some time. Most people would be worried especially if they had to go into hospital or if the doctor asks to see them when they have had tests done.

Worrying about our health sometimes means we make good changes in our life, like eating better or doing more exercise or giving up smoking.

Worrying about your health becomes a problem if there is no reason to think you are poorly, but you change the way you live ‘just in case’ you are.

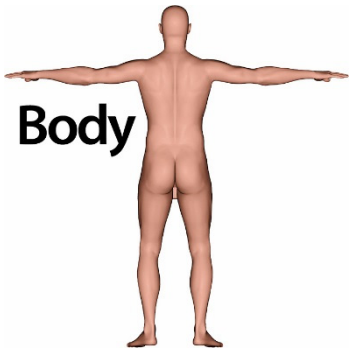
This could be things like:

- Not seeing your friends
- Not going for a walk
- Not going outside

How do I know if I have health anxiety?

You might find that you:

- Go to your doctor or nurse a lot, just to make sure everything is OK.
- Ask your friends or family if they think you are OK.
- Try to find out as much as you can about different illnesses.



- Check your body more often for lumps and bumps.
- Stay away from anything to do with health, like TV programmes or going into chemists.

Having health anxiety can change the way you feel:

You might be nervous or frightened.

- You might feel stressed or on edge.
- You might feel strange or dizzy, like something ‘is not right’.
- You might feel unwell or tired.

It can change the way you think:

- You might worry all the time about being unwell.
- You might worry that when you see the doctor for help he might miss something.
- You might worry that there is something really wrong with you but you are too frightened to do anything about it.

It can change the way your body works:

- You might have funny feelings in parts of your body.
- You might have problems breathing.
- You might get dizzy or have a headache.
- You might need to go to the toilet a lot.

What can I do to stop worrying about my health?

There are lots of things you can do to help.

Talk to your doctor or nurse and they will help you to become less health anxious.

You could write a list or draw a picture of how you feel when you worry about your health.

Keep a diary of how often you worry about your health for a week.

Try not to change the things you do ‘just in case’ you get ill.

Where to get more help

If you would like to get more help or information about health anxiety, you can get in touch with these organisations:

Anxiety Care
Help with feeling nervous or tense.
www.anxietycare.org.uk

Mind Infoline
Help, information and support.
Telephone: 0300 123 3393
Email: info@mind.org.uk
www.mind.org.uk

Rethink
Information and help for anyone who has mental health problems.
Telephone: 0300 500 0927
Email: info@rethink.org
www.rethink.org

You can also get help and information from your doctor or nurse.

Easy Read version developed by:

- Skills for People, Telephone: 0191 281 8737
  Skills for People is a registered charity no. 1069993

- Many thanks to service users and healthcare staff who have contributed to the development of this guide

Adapted from Health Anxiety - A Self Help Guide written by Dr Lesley Maunder and Lorna Cameron
www.cntw.nhs.uk/selfhelp

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Further information about the content, reference sources or production of this leaflet can be obtained from the Patient Information Centre. If you would like to tell us what you think about this leaflet please get in touch.

This information can be made available in a range of formats on request (eg Braille, audio, larger print, BSL or other languages). Please contact the Patient Information Centre Tel: 0191 246 7288

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