



**Medical
Blueprints**

HEALTH ANXIETY WORSE DURING A PANDEMIC REPORT #2855

BACKGROUND: Having obsessive and irrational worry about getting a serious medical condition is known as health anxiety. It was formerly known as hypochondria. This condition is marked by a person's imagination of physical symptoms of illness. In some instances, a person misinterprets a minor or normal body sensation as a serious disease symptom despite reassurance by medical professionals that they don't have an illness. Health anxiety mostly occurs in early or middle adulthood. For older people, it may focus on a fear of developing memory problems. Some other risk factors may include a stressful event or situation; the possibility of a serious illness that turns out to not be serious; being abused as a child; having had a serious childhood illness or a parent with a serious illness; having a worrying personality; or excessively checking your health on the internet. (Source: <https://www.healthline.com/health/health-anxiety>)

IMPROVING HEALTH ANXIETY: The most common treatment for health anxiety is psychotherapy, particularly cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). It can be very effective because it teaches you skills that can help you manage your disorder. Some benefits are learning other ways to look at your body sensations by changing unhelpful thoughts; raising your awareness of how your worries affect you and your behavior; avoiding examining your body for signs of illness and repeatedly looking for reassurance that you're healthy; and, boosting your functioning at home, work, or school, in social settings, and in relationships with others. Other forms of psychotherapy may be used such as behavioral stress management and exposure therapy. Some people don't respond to psychotherapy, therefore, medications may be recommended. Antidepressants, such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs), are frequently used. Some medications come with serious risks and side effects, so it's important to review treatment options with doctors thoroughly. (Source: <https://www.healthline.com/health/health-anxiety#treatment>)

WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF WITH HEALTH ANXIETY: Seeing a therapist and/or doctor can be key when addressing health anxiety, or hypochondria. However, there are ways individuals can help themselves. First, don't research symptoms. If you're prone to worrying about health or physical symptoms, it can help to stay offline and avoid searching for medical explanations. Next is to find support by joining a support group in your area for people with health anxiety and connecting with others who have similar worries or symptoms. Another way is talking about your concerns with others which may help you put the anxiety into perspective. Finally, communicate with your doctor and let them know if you have difficulty letting go of concerns related to your physical health or medical condition. Open communication can help you and your doctor stay on the same page and may also allow your doctor to better understand you and give you any reassurance you need. (Source: <https://www.goodtherapy.org/learn-about-therapy/issues/hypochondria/treatment>)

✉ **For More Information, Contact:**

Laura Radocaj
lradocaj@dgi-comm.com

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