

Does Your Worrying Hurt?

Objective

To identify the physical symptom caused by your worrying.

You Should Know

The excessive worrying associated with Generalized Anxiety Disorder (GAD) can cause you to have physical problems just like other form of stress. Common physical symptoms associated with excessive worrying include:

- restlessness or feeling keyed up or on edge
- being easily fatigued
- muscle tension
- dizziness
- headaches
- stomachaches
- shortness of breath
- dry mouth

Excessive worry is experienced by your body as stress, and so your body reacts by producing “stress biochemicals” including cortisol, adrenaline, norepinephrine, and others. An excess of these biochemicals in the body are associated with high blood pressure and heart disease, the lowering of the immune system, and a variety of other serious illnesses.

Besides the direct physical problems that excessive worrying can cause, constant worrying can also lead to habits that cause poor health. These habits include over-eating or other dietary problems, sleep disturbances, overuse of alcohol or drugs.

What to Do

The worksheet on the next page is designed to help you examine how your worrying is affecting your health.

Note: If you have ongoing physical complaints, you should always see your doctor to find out if there is some medical cause to these problems and if these physical problems need treatment.

Tracking Your Physical Complaints and Your Worries

You should begin by writing in your common physical problems that you think may be associated with your worry and anxiety. Then note how often they occur either daily, weekly, or monthly. Then, rate your physical problems on how these symptoms are affected when you feel worried, using the scale: 1 = not at all affected by my worrying and 10 = always get worse when I worry. Finally, add any comments that occur to you regarding how your worrying effects your physical problems.

Physical Problem	Frequency	Rating	Comments

More to Do

Addressing the physical problems associated with your worrying requires an overall commitment to better health habits. It is important to understand that there is always a mind-body connection to your mental health problems and working on your emotional health *and* physical health will always result in the quickest improvement. In the space below, write down ways you can improve your physical health problems. If you anticipate having difficulty in making improvements in these areas, you may want to consult an appropriate health professional.

Sleep

Exercise

Nutrition

Relaxation Exercises

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

(1 = not very helpful, 5 = moderately helpful, 10 = extremely helpful)

Is there anything in particular you learned in this exercise that was helpful?
