

Do You Worry Too Much About Your Health?

Objective

To determine if your anxiety and worry about your health is excessive.

You Should Know

Everyone worries about their health sometimes, particularly if they have unexplained aches and pains. It is easy to think that a recurring headache is a brain tumor, or a persistent cough is a sign of a serious lung disease. And a search on the Internet can give you good information, but it can also really scare you!

We used to call people who worried too much about their health “hypochondriacs,” but now psychologists refer to excessive worry as “health anxiety.”

The following exercise can help you determine if your worry about your health is excessive, and if it is, what you should do about this.

What to Do

On each line, select the number from 1 to 5 indicating how much you agree with each statement, where 1 = not at all, 2 = slightly, 3 = moderately, 4 = quite a bit, and 5 = a great deal.

Part 1: How Do You Physically Feel?

- ___ I'm bothered by many aches and pains.
- ___ I often have the symptoms of a very serious illness.
- ___ I'm constantly aware of my bodily sensations or changes.
- ___ I check parts of my body repeatedly, looking for abnormalities like lumps.
- ___ When I develop physical symptoms, I automatically wonder which serious illnesses could explain those symptoms.
- ___ If medication doesn't take away a symptom, then I must have a serious illness.
- ___ If I experience an unexpected physical symptom, then I must be ill.

Add up your score: _____

Part 2: What Are Your Fears and Concerns?

- ___ I spend most of my time worrying about my health.
- ___ I often worry that I have a serious illness.
- ___ I am preoccupied with thoughts of becoming ill or dying.
- ___ I think there is something seriously wrong with my body.
- ___ I worry about my health more than most people.
- ___ I am more likely than others to get an illness or get sick more often.
- ___ I worry constantly about germs or about catching someone else's illness.
- ___ My family and friends think I worry too much about my health.

Add up your score: _____

Part 3: Your Relationship with Your Doctor.

- _____ It's hard to believe my doctor when s/he says I have nothing to worry about.
- _____ It is very important to see a doctor at the first sign of getting sick.
- _____ It is difficult for doctors to reassure me that I don't have a serious illness.
- _____ I visit doctors much more frequently than other people I know.
- _____ I avoid doctors because I am frightened about what they might discover.
- _____ I believe doctors often miss signs of serious illnesses in their patients.
- _____ If the doctor sends me for tests, there must be something wrong with me.
- _____ I often ask my doctor to run tests to prove that I am fine.
- _____ I become annoyed if I feel ill and someone tells me that I'm looking better.

Add up your score: _____

Part 4: What Are Your Beliefs About Your Health?

- _____ If I don't constantly monitor my health, something terrible will happen to me.
- _____ After hearing about a disease on the news or online, I worry about contracting it.
- _____ If I develop a serious illness, modern medicine will not be able to cure me.
- _____ I believe most of my health worries are foolish or irrational.
- _____ Having symptoms of illness means I am weak, defective, or inferior.
- _____ I understand that anxiety can produce uncomfortable physical symptoms.
- _____ Having anxiety means I am weak, defective, or inferior.
- _____ If I let myself think I am well and healthy, this will tempt fate.
- _____ I deserve to get ill.
- _____ I have no control over my health.

Add up your score: _____

Your Results and Next Steps

Now, add up the total of the four scores: _____

If your score is **34 – 70**, you do not have health anxiety and probably experience typical concerns about your health.

If your score is **71 – 124**, you have a moderate risk of developing health anxiety. Your fear and concerns do not currently impact your ability to function, but you might find many of the worksheets in this book helpful for reducing your stress and worry.

If your score is **125 – 170**, you most likely have health anxiety. In addition to using this workbook to manage your anxiety, it is critical to have the support of health care professionals with whom feel comfortable and trust. A physician can help you address and manage physical symptoms, while a mental health professional can help you cope with overwhelming fears and concerns.

Note that if you have depression or another anxiety disorder, you are more likely to have a high score. Your health concerns might be connected to those conditions. In such instances, you should discuss this with your therapist or physician.

Is your level of health anxiety higher, lower, or equal to what you previously thought? Explain.

Were you surprised or concerned about any of your answers?

If you scored in the moderate to high range, describe your next steps for addressing your health anxiety.

Reflections on This Exercise

How helpful was this exercise? _____

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

What did you learn from this exercise?
