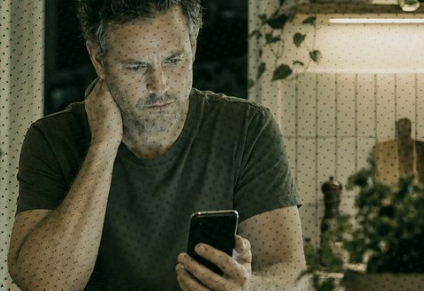
mindhealth FACT SHEET

HEALTH ANXIETY · UNDERSTANDING & MANAGING IT

Health anxiety

When worry about illness becomes the thing that steals the most from life.



Body-focused
Scanning for symptoms

Catastrophic thinking
"What if it's serious?"

Checking & googling
Tests, reassurance, Dr Google

01 When checking backfires

It is sensible to take health seriously. Health anxiety is different: a persistent fear of serious illness that continues despite reassurance and normal results. The body is always producing sensations (a twinge, a flutter, a headache), and an anxious mind reads these ordinary signals as evidence of danger.

02 The reassurance trap

Googling symptoms, booking repeat tests, scanning the body and asking loved ones "do you think it's okay?" all bring a few minutes of calm, then the doubt returns, often stronger. Reassurance is like scratching an itch: it soothes briefly and makes the itch worse. Relief comes from sitting with uncertainty rather than chasing a certainty that never quite lands.

03 What genuinely helps

- A trusted GP and an agreed plan for how often to check in
- CBT to reframe catastrophic readings of normal sensations
- Cutting back on googling, body-scanning and reassurance
- Learning to tolerate uncertainty about health
- Treating the anxiety, not just re-testing the body

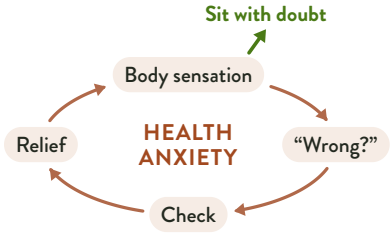
A PRACTICAL STORY

From checking and googling to letting the doubt pass



THE CYCLE

The checking trap



Checking and reassurance calm you briefly, then feed the doubt. Tolerating uncertainty breaks the loop.

PRACTICAL TOOLKIT

Ride out the doubt

1. Notice the urge to check or google
2. Delay it: set a timer, let it pass
3. Refocus on something that matters now

Uncertainty is uncomfortable, not dangerous.

WHEN TO SEEK HELP

If health worries dominate your days or strain your relationships, a psychologist can help. See your GP for a check-up and ask about a Mental Health Treatment Plan for rebates.

DID YOU KNOW?

Health anxiety used to be called hypochondriasis, from the Greek hypochondrion, the area below the ribs once thought to be the seat of low mood.

Oxford English Dictionary

THE KEY TAKEAWAY

The goal isn't certainty that you're well: it's the freedom to live while uncertainty exists.

Need support right now? Lifeline **13 11 14** · Emergency **000** — available 24/7. More options: **mindhealth.com.au/urgent-help**

TALK TO US WHEN YOU'RE READY

Parramatta and online, Australia-wide · **Book at mindhealth.com.au**

1300 084 200

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