

Conditions of Hypochondriasis

Written by Dr. Watkins, Jr., MD
Wednesday, 17 August 2011 14:45



GENERAL INFORMATION - **HYPOCHONDRIASIS**

Definition – A person's conviction that he or she has a serious or fatal disease, despite evidence to the contrary from medical examinations and tests.

BODY PARTS INVOLVED – Brain.

SEX OR AGE MOST AFFECTED – Both sexes; all ages.

SIGNS & SYMPTOMS –Anxiety and persistent reports of symptoms involving any body part. Concern about heart disease or cancer is common. Symptoms may change, but the person's belief that a serious condition exists does not. Frequently reported symptoms include insomnia, sexual dysfunction and gastrointestinal discomfort, such as bloating, belching and cramps.

CAUSES

- * Overly protective parents in childhood.
- * Lack of social outlets and contacts.
- * Guilt feelings and an imagined need for punishment.
- * Extreme need for attention.

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RISK INCREASES WITH

- * Stress.

- * Major life changes, such as a divorce, job change, marriage, move loss of a valued person or object, menopause or retirement.

- * Depression.

- * Psychosis.

HOW TO PREVENT – In childhood, don't reward illness by giving a child special privileges and undue attention for being sick. Provide adequate love and support during healthy periods.

WHAT TO EXPECT

APPROPRIATE HEALTH CARE

- * Doctor's treatment.

- * Psychotherapy or counseling. This offers the best hope for cure. However, few persons with hypochondriasis accept the conclusion that their health problem is psychological.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

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- * Wasting money on unnecessary – and sometimes dangerous – medical care.
- * Insisting on unnecessary surgical procedures or medications.
- * Failure of a doctor to take symptoms of real disease seriously when they do develop.

PROBABLE OUTCOME – Generally resistant to treatment. Most patients maintain a lifelong belief that they have a serious disease, and they change doctors frequently..

HOW TO TREAT

GENERAL MEASURES – Persons with hypochondriasis are often difficult to live with because of their constant worry and demands for attention. Realize that the person really suffers, and try to be supportive. Reward positive behavior that is not related to physical complaints. Don't encourage the "sick role"

MEDICATION – Medicine usually is not necessary for this disorder. Your doctor may prescribe mild tranquilizers for a short time while therapy is being arranged.

ACTIVITY – No restrictions.

DIET – No special diet.

CALL YOUR DOCTOR IF

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- * You have symptoms of hypochondriasis and want professional help to overcome the problem.

- * New, unexplained symptoms develop. Tranquilizers used in treatment may produce side affects or dependence.