

Health anxiety: Don't let your emotions lower your immunity

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The COVID-19 pandemic has had a major impact on our lives and its next wave is a harsh reality we are facing today. "Many of us are confronted with difficulties that are frustrating, daunting, and elicit intense emotions in both adults and children. Under these conditions, it is natural to feel anxious and go through emotional changes. Public health interventions like social distancing, night curfew and lockdown measures are important to curtail COVID-19, but they can make us feel disconnected and depressed," says Vikas Chawla, Founder and Director, Vedas Cure. However, it is important to identify and deal with health anxiety and stress early on in order to avoid serious issues like extreme depression, insomnia, sleep disorders, migraines, and headaches, among other things. Several researchers also claim that negative emotions tend to lower immune response against disease. They have also found that recent symptoms of anxiety and depression increased during the pandemic. Moreover, the signs of mental breakdown are more often seen in young adults up to the age of 40, many of whom lost their jobs to the pandemic; students whose dreams of higher studies were shattered as most countries sealed their international borders for months; and children between the age groups of three and four, who were showing many behavioural issues, as they were confined to their homes. We find out more

Know if your anxiety is pandemic induced

People are experiencing a wide variety of psychological effects as a result of Covid-19 outbreaks. "Regardless of their exposure, people can feel fear and anxiety about being sick or dying, helplessness, or guilt for other people's illnesses, which may lead to a mental breakdown," says Chawla. According to several studies, longer periods of quarantine are linked to a higher prevalence of psychological distress. "Look for symptoms like difficulty in falling asleep, waking up suddenly in the middle of sleep or having bad dreams frequently. E.g. If you are waking up in the sleep worrying about health issues, it is an indicator of rising stress levels due to lockdown," says Pooja Khera, happiness and wellbeing coach. A lot of us use food as a coping mechanism. Research has shown that a higher number of people have seen changes in weight and lack of will or enthusiasm to exercise in the lockdown. "While some fluctuation is normal but if you are increasingly noticing a development of unhealthy eating habits or a significant change in your exercise patterns. For example, increased hunger, frequent cravings, days of no exercise followed by days of excessive exercise, or in some cases loss of appetite, then these are all signs of increased anxiety due to lockdown," adds Khera.

A healthy mind is a healthy body

We are completely fit only when we have a fit body along with a fit mind. "The key is to make time for ourselves and work on our mental well-being daily. Activities that help combat stress and anxiety are key. Some of these may include practicing gratitude, meditation, and keeping a journal. Yoga has the added benefit of helping take care of both mental and physical wellness," says Sonal Singh, Co-founder and Director, Fittr. Aside from that, a regular massage with certain essential oils can help with migraines, insomnia, and depression. "Try massaging your head with lavender oil right before going to bed as it encourages immediate sleep," suggests Chawla. Another trick that works wonderfully is sound healing in which copper singing bowls emit sound vibrations. "These sound waves are extremely strong and immediately induce deep relaxation in the patient. When a person is neurological problem," adds Chawla.

DID YOU KNOW?

Stress is said to be responsible for about 75% of all diseases.

Signs you are suffering from health anxiety

1. You're constantly stressed about contracting the virus
2. You constantly scan your body for symptoms
3. You're constantly checking your temperature
4. You're obsessively thinking about the pandemic which makes it difficult for you to focus on your work
5. Covid-19 is your only topic of discussion
6. You excessively consume pandemic news
7. You're not reassured by negative test results
8. You have sleepless nights and nightmares
9. You think everyone you meet is a carrier of the virus
10. You overuse the hand sanitiser and other disinfectants

Top 5 anxiety busters

- Pets
- Plants
- Feel-good and inspiring movies
- Creative pursuits
- Learning a new sport or a fun workout