

## **HYPOCHONDRIA: HEALTH ANXIETY TO THE MAX!**

*And this headache means I probably gotta tumor in my head*

*And this mark on my back is practically blood red*

*It could be cancer of the spine,*

*but my doctor says I'm fine... Max Vernon*

### **WHAT TO KNOW!**

- ❖ Hypochondria is an excessive preoccupation or worry about having an illness
- ❖ It often persists despite medical evaluation indicating no basis for the symptoms
- ❖ Hypochondriacs account for 6% of medical visits in the United States every year and cost \$20 billion in wasted medical resources
- ❖ Many hypochondriacs focus on a specific symptom such as heart palpitations and chest pains, although the symptoms and focus can change
- ❖ Hypochondriacs fear that a symptom may indicate a true serious illness and constantly examine themselves despite what their doctors tell them
- ❖ It is really a disorder of thought and emotion and not the body; it is real and treatable
- ❖ Hypochondriacs will seek constant reassurance that they are not ill
- ❖ Hypochondriacs are not faking or malingering but really feel distress although there is no medical basis for their feelings
- ❖ The fear and worry hypochondriacs have is far greater than the actual medical risk
- ❖ They believe that minor aches and pains are signs of a real and serious illness
- ❖ Hypochondriasis is often accompanied by depression, obsessive compulsive disorder, somatization disorder, phobias, and anxiety
- ❖ Like OCD, many hypochondriacs have intrusive thoughts of having an illness which is followed by compulsive checking which can be quite disruptive to daily functioning
- ❖ **Cyberchondria** is when people research medical conditions on the internet and then believe they have the illness they read about
- ❖ Hypochondria can occur after an illness or death of a friend or family member and can also be related to states of anxiety and depression
- ❖ Hypochondria is contributed to by more access to medical information on the internet, media coverage of illnesses like swine flu, commercials about drugs and illnesses, medical television shows, and approaching the age of a parent's premature death
- ❖ Hypochondriasis tends to start equally among men and women in their 20s and 30s
- ❖ Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and antidepressant medications can be quite effective in treating Hypochondriasis

### **WHAT TO DO!**

- ❖ Recognize and accept that your symptoms are of anxiety and not of a medical illness
- ❖ Accept what is difficult to accept- that there is nothing medically wrong with you but it is the way that you think that is wrong
- ❖ Change your attitudes and beliefs about life and try to be optimistic
- ❖ Change your patterns of behavior to increase your self esteem
- ❖ Increase your social activities and get out of the house more often
- ❖ To decrease anxiety, work out, do relaxation exercises, meditate, take yoga classes
- ❖ Seek professional help to reduce your anxiety and develop effective coping skills

### **WE CAN HELP!**

Call us at **954 755-2885** or email us at **DrKimmel@aol.com**.

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