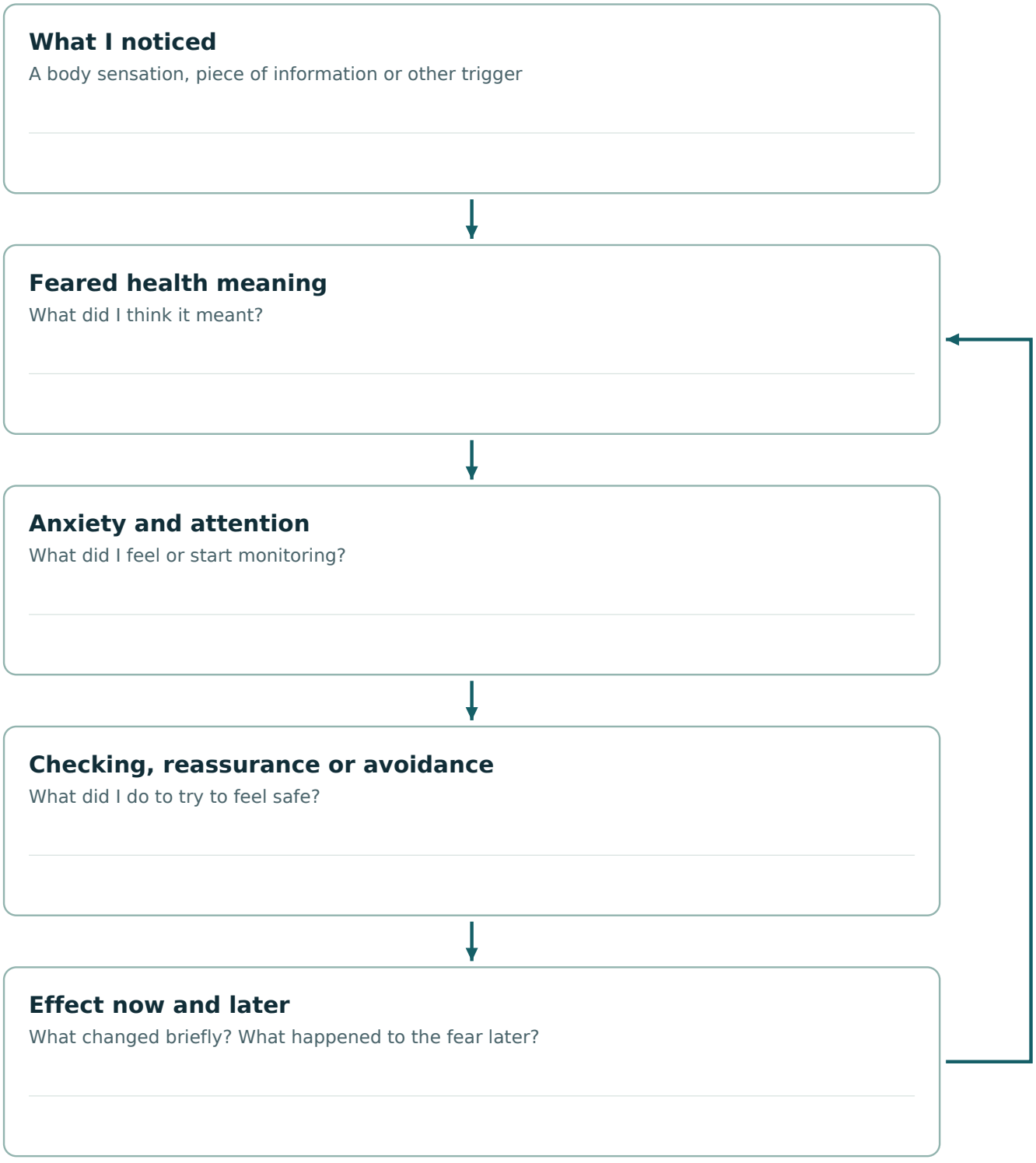
Health anxiety cycle

Map one health worry. Keep agreed medical care; this sheet cannot assess physical symptoms.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.



The return arrow shows how later effects can keep the pattern going.

Episode map informed by Warwick & Salkovskis (1990). Medical decisions need appropriate care.

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Health checking diary

Use brief notes or estimates. Record selected examples afterwards; there is no need to monitor constantly.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

When and how often to record

ENTRY 1 - date / time: _____

Trigger / urge

Check, search or reassurance

Time; immediate effect

Later effect / agreed care?

ENTRY 2 - date / time: _____

Trigger / urge

Check, search or reassurance

Time; immediate effect

Later effect / agreed care?

Pattern noticed / next step

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Healthcare plan

Take this to the clinician involved in your care. Confirm medical instructions together; do not invent them.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Current medical advice and treatment

Questions for my clinician

Confirmed with: name, role and date

The agreed healthcare plan

Follow-up / review arrangements

What to do if symptoms or circumstances change

Extra anxiety-related checking to discuss in CBT

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Health anxiety attention experiment

Compare specific observations. A difference is useful information, not a demand to feel calm or certain.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Familiar worry and relevant agreed care

Usual attention - recalled

Attention pattern and prediction

Participation and checking urge

What I noticed; what remains uncertain

Engaged attention - tried

Attention pattern and prediction

Participation and checking urge

What I noticed; what remains uncertain

What I learned / what is still uncertain

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Health checking experiment

Make a specific prediction and a fair test. Plan any safeguards before practice; record observations afterwards.

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BEFORE PRACTICE

Extra checking / prediction / belief 0-100%

Agreed care and safeguards to keep

One planned change and ordinary activity

AFTER PRACTICE - observations and learning

What happened / other rituals or urges

Learning / belief now / limits of this test

Next step agreed with my therapist

Keep agreed medical care. A worksheet cannot assess new, severe or changing physical symptoms.

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Health anxiety activity plan

Choose a feasible step towards something meaningful. Keep relevant healthcare advice and practical support.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

Activity and why it matters to me

First step / smaller version

When, where / support / health advice

Prediction / likely obstacle

How I will respond and adapt

What I did and what I noticed

Learning / next step

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Health anxiety setback plan

Keep the learning visible. Match each early sign with a practical response rather than waiting for a difficult week.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What I have learned

If I notice...	A small response I can use	Support / when to review

Helpful habits to keep

Support / when to ask for help

Review date / reminder

Keep agreed medical care. A worksheet cannot assess new, severe or changing physical symptoms.

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Toolkit guide and contents

The worksheets come first. Select what fits your goals; you do not need to complete every sheet.

Using this collection

Health anxiety and physical illness can coexist. Continue medication, screening, monitoring and follow-up recommended by your healthcare professional, and seek advice for new, worsening or concerning symptoms. Experiments must not delay needed care or involve provoking symptoms. If self-help increases checking or reassurance, pause and discuss it. People aged 16-17 need age-appropriate support and adaptation.

Worksheet starting pages

01 Health anxiety cycle

02 Health checking diary

03 Healthcare plan

04 Health anxiety attention experiment

05 Health checking experiment

06 Health anxiety activity plan

Guidance and fictional examples follow this index. Individual website downloads also contain fillable fields; this complete toolkit is for printing.

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Using this resource

Health anxiety cycle

What this helps with

Health anxiety concerns how health-related uncertainty is interpreted and managed; it does not mean that symptoms are invented or that physical illness is impossible. In the cognitive-behavioural model, checking, reassurance and avoidance can keep threat prominent even when they bring temporary relief. This worksheet helps map one example without deciding what a symptom means medically. Include diagnosed conditions and agreed care so that therapy supports, rather than replaces, appropriate healthcare.

How to use it

1. Start with one sensation, event or piece of information.
2. Write the health problem you feared it meant.
3. Add the anxiety, body focus or monitoring that followed.
4. Record checking, reassurance seeking or avoidance, then the short-term and later effects. Keep agreed medical care separate from repeated attempts to feel certain.
5. Follow the return arrow to consider whether the fear stayed believable. Discuss a possible change separately, without delaying needed healthcare.

A fictional worked example

Farah reads an article about illness and notices a familiar ache. Her interpretation is, "The earlier assessment must have missed something." She examines the area repeatedly and searches the same symptom with slightly different wording. Each search reassures her briefly before another doubt appears. Her map includes the follow-up already agreed with her GP, which stays in place. It also shows that the extra searches increase her focus on the ache and interrupt family time. The treatment question is how to respond to repeated doubt outside that care plan, not whether an online worksheet can prove that she is healthy.

Keep in mind

Continue prescribed treatment, screening, monitoring and follow-up. New, worsening or concerning symptoms need appropriate medical advice. Health anxiety can coexist with physical illness. This worksheet cannot rule out disease or tell you whether to seek care; discuss uncertainty about that with a healthcare professional.

Sources and attribution

Warwick, H. M. C., & Salkovskis, P. M. (1990). Hypochondriasis. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 28(2), 105-117.

NHS. Health anxiety. Accessed 24 October 2026.

Original material informed by the sources above. No outside organisation endorses this worksheet.

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Using this resource

Health checking diary

What this helps with

Checking may feel like a way to settle uncertainty, yet the urge often returns after a brief period of relief. A limited record can show this sequence and help choose a manageable treatment target. The aim is to understand the function of the behaviour, not to count every sensation. Keep clinician-advised monitoring clearly separate. Repeated mental reviewing, comparison and asking the same question in new ways may also be relevant.

How to use it

1. Choose a short recording period, such as three days, and a brief daily review time.
2. Record the trigger and the extra check, search, reassurance request or mental review.
3. Estimate time spent and note what happened to the urge immediately and later.
4. Mark any clinician-advised care separately. Review one repeated pattern and a possible next step with your therapist.

A fictional worked example

George notes that he searches a familiar symptom after seeing a health post. The first search takes ten minutes and brings relief for around five minutes. He then adds "but what if" details and spends another half-hour searching. His record also includes a blood-pressure check specifically requested by his clinician; this is marked as agreed care and is not a target for reduction. After three days, he can see that unplanned searches tend to grow without answering a new question. He chooses to discuss a small experiment on repeated searching, while continuing the monitoring schedule he has been given.

Keep in mind

This is not a symptom-surveillance chart. Avoid extra physical checks for the purpose of filling it in. Do not reduce prescribed monitoring or needed help-seeking. If you cannot distinguish necessary care from anxiety-driven repetition, clarify a plan with your clinician before making changes.

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Using this resource

Healthcare plan

What this helps with

It can be difficult to judge whether you are following medical advice or repeatedly checking because uncertainty feels unbearable. A shared plan with an appropriate healthcare professional can clarify what care is needed and what to do if symptoms change. This sheet is a discussion aid, not a medical protocol. Your therapist can help with anxiety responses; the relevant healthcare professional should guide medical monitoring, treatment and escalation.

How to use it

1. List existing advice, treatment and follow-up, using the wording you were given.
2. Note what is unclear: what to monitor, how often, and which changes need help.
3. Ask your healthcare professional to clarify the plan and record when it should be reviewed.
4. With your therapist, identify extra reassurance or checking outside this plan and a suitable response to the urge.

A fictional worked example

Nadia has a diagnosed condition and also finds herself checking repeatedly between scheduled appointments. She brings this sheet to her healthcare professional and asks what monitoring is needed and what changes should prompt contact. She records their advice in her own words and checks that she has understood it. In therapy, she works on searches that repeat the same question without new information. If a relevant change occurs, she follows the care plan rather than treating every urge as anxiety. She does not ask her therapist to decide medication or use the worksheet to invent a universal rule about when symptoms matter.

Keep in mind

Leave medical instructions blank until clarified with the relevant clinician. Do not use a fixed "wait" rule for new or concerning symptoms. Continue treatment and seek emergency care for a medical emergency. This sheet cannot replace clinical judgement, triage or an individual medical assessment.

Sources and attribution

NHS. Health anxiety. Accessed 24 October 2026.

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Using this resource

Health anxiety attention experiment

What this helps with

When attention keeps returning to the body, familiar sensations may become more prominent. Exploring attention can help you understand this part of your anxiety cycle. The experiment is about how attention and engagement change your experience, not about proving that a symptom is harmless. Observe your usual pattern briefly in retrospect, then practise engaging with an ordinary external task. Avoid deliberately increasing symptom monitoring to create a stronger comparison.

How to use it

1. Choose a familiar health worry and confirm any relevant care plan with your clinician or therapist.
2. Describe a recent period of habitual body attention and its effects. Do not recreate extra checking.
3. Choose an ordinary task for a brief period, letting sensations be present while attending to the task.
4. Compare engagement, urge to check and learning. Do not use repeated physical measurements to judge success.

A fictional worked example

Louise notices that a familiar, assessed sensation becomes the centre of her attention while she reads health forums. Her prediction is, "I cannot focus on anything else while this is here." Instead of checking more closely as a test, she records the pattern from yesterday. She then spends ten minutes helping her niece choose a birthday card, allowing the sensation to remain in the background. She notices that her attention shifts in and out of the task, and she still contributes to the conversation. She learns something about flexibility of attention; she does not conclude that the sensation's cause has been medically established.

Keep in mind

This exercise is not a diagnostic test and must not delay needed care. Continue agreed monitoring. Choose an ordinary, safe activity and do not induce symptoms or deliberately intensify body scanning. If symptoms are new or concerning, seek appropriate medical advice rather than testing attention.

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Using this resource

Health checking experiment

What this helps with

Changing a checking habit is easier to evaluate when you know what you are testing. You might predict that uncertainty will become unbearable or that you cannot continue your day without another search. This experiment investigates that coping prediction. It does not ask you to prove that illness is impossible. Start with a familiar repeated behaviour, clearly outside required healthcare, and plan the change with your therapist where appropriate.

How to use it

1. Identify one repeated extra check, search or reassurance request and the prediction attached to it.
2. Confirm what medical care must continue. Choose a modest change to the extra habit.
3. Plan an ordinary activity to continue while allowing the urge, without replacing the check with another ritual.
4. Record the outcome, what you coped with and any limits to the evidence. Review before increasing the task.

A fictional worked example

Oliver wants to repeat the same online symptom search after receiving no new information. His medical plan remains unchanged. He predicts, "If I do not search again, I will be unable to finish dinner," believed 80%. With his therapist, he agrees to leave that repeat search and continue preparing food, without asking his partner the same question instead. The urge comes in waves, and he finishes the meal while still uncertain. His learning concerns his ability to carry on without that extra search. The exercise does not establish whether he has a medical condition or remove the need to follow agreed care.

Keep in mind

Only target extra anxiety-driven repetition, not new symptoms, urgent help-seeking, screening, prescribed checks or follow-up. If the boundary is unclear, consult your clinician first. Do not replace checking with repeated self-reassurance, symptom comparisons or asking someone else to check. Review excessive distress with your therapist.

Sources and attribution

Warwick, H. M. C., & Salkovskis, P. M. (1990). Hypochondriasis. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 28(2), 105-117.

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Using this resource

Health anxiety activity plan

What this helps with

Health anxiety can take time away from relationships, work and activities, through checking or avoidance. A maintenance plan should therefore include what you want to return to, not only what you want to reduce. Choose activities consistent with your health advice and review the learning from small steps. Future health news or symptoms may bring worry back; a plan can help you distinguish using CBT skills from following medical guidance.

How to use it

1. Name one activity that health worry has restricted and why it matters to you.
2. Check relevant health advice, then choose a manageable return step and date.
3. Record what you predict, what happens and what you learn about engagement or coping.
4. List likely future triggers, early signs of repeated checking, useful CBT responses and when to seek further professional support.

A fictional worked example

Helen has stopped meeting friends because she spends evenings searching health information. Her clinician has not advised restricting social activity. She plans a short café visit and predicts that health worries will make conversation impossible. During the visit, worries appear, but she also listens and laughs. Her setback plan names health headlines as a trigger and repeated late-night searches as an early sign. She will return to agreed care, review her checking experiment and reconnect with an activity. If symptoms change, she will seek appropriate advice; if anxiety again substantially restricts life, she will contact her therapist or GP for support.

Keep in mind

Adapt activity to medical advice, disability and energy limits; this is not an instruction to push through symptoms. Keep screening and follow-up. Seek advice for new or worsening symptoms and further psychological support when anxiety limits functioning. For ages 16-17, arrange age-appropriate professional guidance.

Sources and attribution

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Health anxiety: two explanations

Use with a therapist. Keep agreed medical care in place.

Editable PDF: replace or delete the fictional examples. Blank PDF: print and write. Guidance follows.

What started the health worry?

Explanation 1: what am I afraid this means?

Explanation 2: how might anxiety and checking contribute?

What would each explanation predict about worry and checking?

What safe task and medical boundaries will we agree?

What happened, and what can I reasonably conclude?

Your notes stay in your copy of this PDF. Keep them private; nothing is sent to this website.

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Health anxiety: two explanations - guide

Use alongside the worksheet on page 1. Adapt it to your needs and any therapy plan.

What this helps with

Health anxiety can make a feared interpretation feel like the only explanation. With your therapist, consider whether anxiety, attention and checking also help explain the pattern. This sheet examines the worry process; it cannot establish whether a physical illness is present or absent.

How to use it

1. Choose one episode and separate what you noticed from what you feared it meant.

2. Write the feared explanation and an alternative about the anxiety process. Both anxiety and a physical health condition can be present.

3. With your therapist, compare predictions about attention, checking, reassurance and daily activity. Do not create symptom tests or try to prove the absence of illness.

4. Agree a safe small task within your medical care plan, then record what it teaches about the worry process and what remains uncertain.

A fictional example

Priya reads about an illness and repeatedly searches for further signs. Her feared explanation is that stopping would be irresponsible. An alternative is that searching is increasing doubt and the urge to check. Within her agreed care plan, she closes the article and returns to a phone call. She learns she can remain involved despite uncertainty; the exercise tells her nothing definitive about her medical health.

Keep in mind

Keep prescribed treatment, necessary tests and agreed medical appointments. Do not use this sheet to decide whether a symptom needs assessment or to delay urgent care. Seek appropriate medical advice for new, severe, changing or unexplained symptoms. A therapist-guided experiment must not involve unsafe exertion, stopping medicines or withholding needed care.

Review your learning

What did this show about attention, reassurance or checking, without turning learning into a guarantee?

Sources informing the approach

Warwick, H. M., & Salkovskis, P. M. (1990). Hypochondriasis. Behaviour Research and Therapy, 28(2), 105-117. doi:10.1016/0005-7967(90)90023-C.

NHS. Health anxiety.

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