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# **Can Anxiety Attack Symptoms Cause Real Physical Illness?**

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Anyone who has experienced anxiety attack symptoms can attest to the fact that they can physically "hurt." The physical symptoms of an anxiety attack can include body aches and pains, headaches, upset stomach, chest pains, tingling sensations in the extremities or dizziness, just to name a few.

But can these anxiety attack symptoms actually cause a person to develop a physical illness? Researchers had studied the mind-body connection for many years, and there is an overwhelming amount of evidence suggesting that our state of mind affects our immune system, blood pressure, and even the ability to heal properly after an accident or surgery.

Bearing that in mind, chronic anxiety symptoms can certainly contribute to poor overall health, and the majority of researchers tend to agree that anxiety symptoms can overtime cause, or at the very least contribute to, real physical illnesses. One famous research study (Holmes and Rahe, 1967), observed that the majority of individuals admitted to hospital with an illness had experienced several stressful life events in the months preceding the illness.

Many similar studies have also shown a high correlation between anxiety and illness. Another notable study determined that cancer is more prevalent among divorced, separated individuals than for married adults (Miller & Rahe, 1997), suggesting that the stress of a divorce or separation could lead to real physical illness.

There has also been research into the connection between anxiety attack symptoms and the immune system. Dozens of controlled studies have shown a relationship between stress/anxiety and reduced function of white blood cells, which attack foreign bodies in the bloodstream.

Measuring white blood cells is one common way to assess the vitality of the immune system, and it has long been observed that individuals experiencing chronic stress or anxiety attack symptoms tend to have lower white blood cell counts than non-stressed individuals.

So while the research into the effects of anxiety on the body are not absolute, there is enough evidence to assume that stress and anxiety are the natural enemies of the immune system, and if left unchecked, can lead to any number of physical illnesses.

Of course, this does not mean that anyone experiencing anxiety attacks is going to get sick. However, it does suggest that remaining in a state of chronic anxiety over a period of time can weaken the body, making illness more likely. For this reason, it is important to both our physical and mental well-being to get enough relaxation, and to learn to control stress and anxiety levels.

Techniques such as biofeedback, talk therapy, guided visualization, meditation, breathing exercises, yoga and increased physical exercise have all been shown to reduce stress levels; and when practiced as a way of life, these techniques can significantly reduce anxiety attack symptoms, improving our overall mental and physical health.

Personal development training can also be effective in helping individuals to make better lifestyle choices, thus reducing anxiety in their day-to-day lives. Examples of these choices could include changes in diet, increased physical exercise, changing television and film viewing habits, and practicing any number of calming and

relaxation techniques as part of a daily ritual.

It is clear that anxiety attack symptoms aren't good for the human body. Study after study has concluded that there is at very least a contributing relationship between anxiety and disease. But by learning to "let off steam" by using relaxation techniques, physical exercise and other methods, we can ensure that we reduce anxiety attack symptoms and excess stress, producing a healthier state of mind and body.

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