

Cyberchondria

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Do you know if you have cyberchondria? You just may have cyberchondria if you leap to dire conclusions regarding your health while researching health problems on the internet. For example, if you have had chronic, lower abdominal pain, there are several diagnosis that could be the cause of your abdominal pain including: appendicitis, colon cancer, celiac disease, endometriosis, and viral gastroenteritis. However, none of these diagnosis can be confirmed unless you are seen by a physician with diagnostic testing completed. In addition to worrying about a catastrophic disease, cyberchondria could lead to additional concerns regarding potential medical bills, disability, job loss, unnecessary medical testing, and distress.

How to break the cycle of cyberchondria?

1. Don't look up vague symptoms that could be related to almost anything. Otherwise, you will end up lost in a black hole of self-diagnosis and have a meltdown.
2. If you must search the internet; limit yourself to trusted websites. Legitimate websites include: Cleveland Clinic, Mayo Clinic, Mercy Medical Center, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and Free MD. Free MD is advertised as a virtual doctor that allows you to enter your symptoms with a series of questions and results including what might be wrong with you, where you should go for care (ER, urgent care, or doctor's office), what you can do at home, and the ability to email the triage report to your doctor.
3. Don't share your worries on a message board. Your symptoms won't have the same cause as someone else's symptoms and will leave you even more worried.
4. Only use the internet **after** a doctor's visit. If your physician has diagnosed you with an illness, then it's much safer to learn more about your disease on the internet than to try to provide a self diagnosis.

