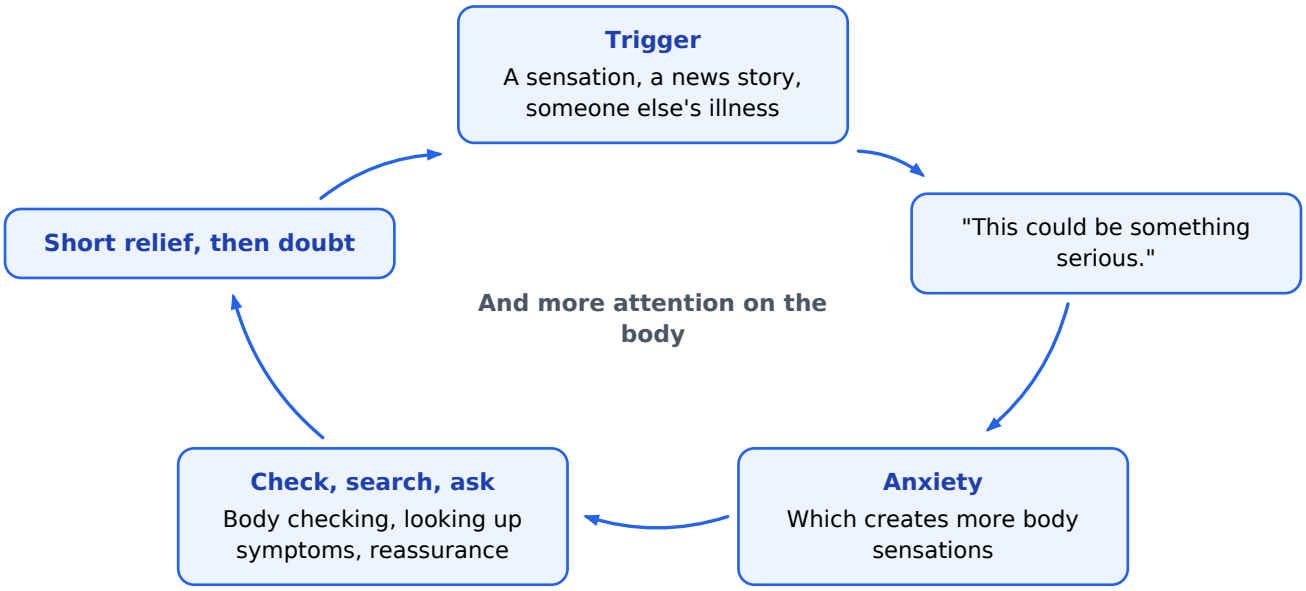
Understanding health anxiety

When worry about illness becomes the problem.

Everyone worries about their health sometimes. Health anxiety is when the worry is persistent, out of proportion to the medical findings, and takes over a lot of your time and peace of mind. The distress is completely real, whatever the cause of the symptoms.

How it works



Things worth knowing

- **Bodies are noisy.** Twinges, lumps, aches, flutters and odd sensations are part of normal life. Most have no medical meaning.
- **Attention amplifies.** Focus on any body part for a minute and you will find sensations there.
- **Anxiety has symptoms.** A racing heart, dizziness, tingling, stomach upset, tight chest and headaches are all caused by anxiety itself.
- **Checking causes symptoms.** Prodding a lump makes it sore. Repeated swallowing makes a throat feel tight.
- **Reassurance wears off.** A clear test brings relief for a while, then "what if they missed something?" arrives.

What treatment involves

1. Testing a different explanation: that the problem is worry about health, not health.
2. Cutting back on checking, searching and reassurance, step by step.
3. Learning to let body sensations and uncertainty be there without acting on them.
4. Getting back to the life that health worry has pushed aside.

> **This is not about ignoring your health**
> Sensible medical care continues. We can agree a clear plan with your GP for when a symptom should be checked, so you do not have to decide in an anxious moment.

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