

Health Anxiety — Thought Record Sheet

Notice the worry. Understand the cycle. Find a more balanced response.

Health anxiety can make ordinary or unexplained body sensations feel highly significant. A sensation is noticed, the mind moves quickly towards a frightening explanation, anxiety rises, and you may feel driven to check your body, search online, ask for reassurance or seek repeated confirmation that you are safe.

These responses can bring short-term relief. The difficulty is that the relief often does not last, and the next sensation or doubt can restart the cycle.

What this thought record is for

This sheet helps you separate what you have actually noticed from what anxiety is predicting. It also helps you identify checking and reassurance behaviours, consider reasonable alternative explanations and choose a helpful next action.

What it is not for

It is not a tool for persuading yourself that every symptom is harmless. New, severe, persistent, worsening or concerning symptoms may need appropriate medical assessment. The aim is to find a proportionate response rather than either repeatedly seeking reassurance or automatically dismissing physical concerns.

The health-anxiety cycle

Body sensation / health information	→	Threat interpretation	→	Anxiety
Checking / reassurance / searching	←	Short-term relief	←	More attention to body

My Health Anxiety Thought Record

Date: _____ Time: _____

1. What triggered the worry?

A body sensation, symptom, story, appointment, test, social-media post, conversation or something else:

2. What did I actually notice?

Describe the facts without adding the feared explanation yet:

3. What did my anxious mind predict?

What was I frightened the symptom or information might mean?

4. How strongly did I believe the feared thought?

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100%

5. Anxiety intensity

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. What did I feel driven to do?

- ☐ Check my body ☐ Search online ☐ Ask somebody for reassurance
☐ Contact a health professional repeatedly ☐ Compare symptoms ☐ Avoid activity
☐ Monitor pulse / breathing / another sensation ☐ Other: _____

Widening the Picture

The purpose of this page is not to prove that nothing is wrong. It is to move from one frightening explanation towards a more balanced range of possibilities.

What evidence makes me concerned?

What information does not fully fit the feared conclusion?

Are there other reasonable explanations?

For example: stress, tiredness, muscle tension, lack of sleep, normal body variation, medication effects, illness recovery, hormonal changes or another non-catastrophic explanation. Do not use this list to self-diagnose — simply notice that more than one explanation may exist.

What would a proportionate health response look like?

- Follow advice already given by my clinician
- Make an appropriate routine appointment if needed
- Follow an agreed symptom-monitoring plan
- Seek urgent help because symptoms meet appropriate urgent-care guidance
- Pause repeated checking / searching / reassurance
- Return attention to ordinary activity
- I am unsure and need appropriate professional advice

A more balanced thought

Example: *"I have noticed a symptom and my anxious mind has gone straight to the worst-case explanation. I can respond appropriately without repeatedly checking for certainty."*

My balanced thought:

Checking, Reassurance and Online Searching

Health anxiety often increases attention to the body. The more closely you monitor sensations, the more sensations you may notice. This can make the body feel increasingly unfamiliar or threatening.

My reassurance pattern

What I do	Short-term effect	What happens later?
Check or press part of my body		
Search symptoms online		
Ask family / friends		
Seek repeated medical reassurance		
Compare myself with others		
Avoid exercise / activity		
Monitor a body measurement		
Other: _____		

A small experiment

Choose one reassurance or checking behaviour that is safe and appropriate to reduce. You might delay an unnecessary search, avoid rechecking something already appropriately assessed, or return your attention to an ordinary task. Do not use this exercise to ignore medical advice or genuine red-flag symptoms.

The behaviour I will experiment with reducing: _____

What I expect will happen: _____

What actually happened: _____

Quick Health Anxiety Record

Use this shorter version when you need a simple check-in.

Step	My notes
Trigger	What did I notice? _____
Fear	What am I worried it means? _____
Anxiety	____ /10
Response	Checking / searching / reassurance / avoidance / other
Wider view	What else could reasonably explain this? _____
Health action	What is a proportionate response? _____
Next step	What will I do now? _____

When to stop using the worksheet

If you find yourself completing the record repeatedly about the same symptom in order to feel certain, it may be becoming another reassurance behaviour. Put it down, follow any appropriate medical plan you already have, and consider discussing the pattern with a suitable professional.

Progress may look like...

- noticing the catastrophic thought sooner
- searching online less often
- reducing repeated body checking
- tolerating some uncertainty
- following medical advice without repeatedly seeking additional reassurance
- returning attention to everyday life more quickly

A Message From Me

Health anxiety can be exhausting because the thing you are frightened about is your own body — something you cannot simply walk away from.

Every new sensation can feel as though it demands an immediate explanation. And when reassurance only helps for a short time, you can find yourself checking again and again while feeling less certain rather than more.

This thought record is designed to help you create a little space between noticing something and automatically arriving at the worst possible conclusion.

You do not have to dismiss your health concerns. You also do not have to investigate every sensation repeatedly.

The middle ground is learning to respond proportionately: noticing what is happening, seeking appropriate medical advice when it is genuinely needed, and recognising when anxiety is asking for a level of certainty that nobody can achieve.

Small changes count. One less search. One delayed check. One moment of returning your attention to what you were doing. One occasion when you followed the advice you already had rather than asking again.

If health worries are taking up significant time, affecting your relationships or activities, or leading to repeated checking and reassurance seeking, psychological support can help you work with the cycle.

Space to Breathe Therapy

Safety note: This worksheet should never be used to dismiss new, severe, worsening or concerning symptoms. Seek appropriate medical advice when needed. For a medical emergency in the UK, call 999 or attend A&E.;

This resource is for psychoeducation and self-reflection and is not a substitute for individual medical or mental-health assessment or treatment.