Can Anxiety Lead to High Blood Pressure?

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Anxiety and High Blood Pressure: Understanding the Link

Anxiety and high blood pressure are very different things, but they are connected in some ways. And each of them is a condition that could be potentially very dangerous to your health if they are not dealt with.

Everybody has heard the two terms before, and everybody has probably had some experience with one or both of them, even if they do not realize that they have. They are both very common afflictions.

Like many words and terms, we use them frivolously. We throw around anxiety and blood pressure to emphasize how we feel about normal, day-to-day life. There is nothing wrong with this of course, but what these issues actually feel like and their true implications are lost on a lot of people.

Because they are so common, it would be worth knowing what anxiety and high blood pressure are really about, how they are connected and what you can do to make sure that they do not affect your life too much. So, before getting into the link between anxiety and high blood pressure, let's get a bit of context here, so we can better understand these two terms.

What Is Anxiety?

Anxiety is something that most of us deal with regularly in our lives. It's a natural response to stress. Usually it happens due to things that are out of control or that are surrounded by a great sense of the unknown.

As such, we experience anxiety for a number of different reasons, ranging from things like the first day of a new job or a potentially promising date, to our loved ones being ill or being faced with a highly dangerous situation. In this respect, it is actually quite a broad term and for the vast majority of people, as anxiety is not something that they should necessarily worry about. It's unpleasant and uncomfortable, but relatively harmless.

Persistent Anxiety and Anxiety Disorders

There are those of us who suffer from persistent anxiety or anxiety disorders. These are intense feelings of nervousness over everyday situations and they are frequent, unexplainable attacks which are very difficult to control.

Anxiety disorders can range in severity. Some people will be affected by it on a relatively basic level and only have a serious attack every now and again, while others will have their lives completely overwhelmed and have attacks constantly.

Anxiety can be helped with therapy and medication, but a lot of people who might need treatment do not actually realize that they do. Therefore, anxiety may maintain its hold on some people, and it can lead to things like heart disease and a weakened immune system.

What Is High Blood Pressure?

In the past, you have probably off-handedly claimed to be experiencing high blood pressure yourself during a particularly potent moment of anger or stress, but have you ever actually thought about what the words mean? High blood pressure is when your body has to push blood through your arteries with much more force than normal, due to your body being in need of more oxygen to survive and to function as normal. This can be caused by a number of factors. It's common in overweight people whose bodies have to work harder due to having a greater mass to spread the oxygen and various nutrients through.

If you are a smoker, or if you drink a lot of alcohol, you are also forcing your body to work harder. Also, blood pressure gets worse with age and it gets worse if you do not do as much exercise as you should be doing.

When you are forcing your body to aggressively pump blood in this way, you are overworking your blood vessels and putting a lot of pressure on your arteries. Over time, this can make you susceptible to the possibility of a heart attack or a stroke.

What's the Connection?

It should come as no surprise that a bout of anxiety can raise your blood pressure. Your mind is racing, your adrenaline is pumping, and your body will recognize this as a state of high activity and start pumping your blood faster.

Your brain and body need oxygen to function, so your body will forcibly supply it. However, anxiety will not lead to hypertension, which is the word we use to classify a condition in which one's blood pressure is in a regularly increased state. Hypertension is not the same as occasionally having high blood pressure due to a specific incident, it is a long-term condition which would be very advisable to control with medication and frequent checkups. Make sure to talk to your doctor about this.

You cannot get this as a result of having an anxiety disorder, however, you can experience an episode of high blood pressure while also dealing with anxiety. So, if you are regularly anxious, then you will regularly have high blood pressure.

It will not specifically be hypertension, but in truth it might as well be, because your body will still be facing the effects of that condition. So, this is a big part of the reason why stress and anxiety are contributing factors to heart attacks.

Get the Help You Need

If you are an anxiety sufferer, it might be a good idea to keep an eye on your blood pressure, and if you notice that it is high most of the time, then it might be worth looking into treatment for your anxiety.

Even if you think your personal dealings with anxiety are relatively benign, do not be afraid to seek help because prolonged exposure to the effects of it can have serious, life-threatening consequences.