

ask Dr Roshan Jain

Your *mental and emotional health* questions answered

Q **My husband is a software professional whose work schedule is shift-oriented. He has been suffering from racing heartbeats with shakes, sweats, fear and difficulty in breathing. These occur for no specific reason. We have had to rush him to the emergency many times. But medical investigations, especially ECG, stress test and echocardiography are normal. Despite doctor's assurances that his heart is healthy, he believes he is suffering from some unidentified condition. He has been advised and referred for psychiatrist consultation, but he refuses to do so? What should we do?**

It seems like your hubby is suffering from an anxiety disorder referred to as hypochondriasis or health anxiety. It is likely that his anxiety is manifesting in the form of excessive pre-occupation and worry about having a serious illness. Hypochondriasis can be triggered by life events such as serious illness or death of a friend/family member. An anxious personality with excessive focus on minor health concerns has been implicated as a potential cause. Even random, obscure and inaccurate portrayal of illnesses in the news media can exacerbate a hypochondriac's fear. In some, there may be other underlying stress, depression and/or psychological problems.

It will be of help for your hubby to seek for himself a psychiatric consultation. He will benefit from structured psycho-education, advice and counselling about the absence of a medical problem, and

from linking his presentation to possible trigger factors. Antidepressants can be considered too. Although uncommon, his condition is treatable. Early treatment will prevent further suffering and speed up recovery.

Q **Is hookah smoking less addictive and safer than smoking cigarettes?**

I am glad you asked this question! This is one misconception that is leading



many to take to hookah smoking and then end up smoking cigarette itself.

Hookah smoking is unhealthier and more addictive than cigarettes. It's this way: A cigarette smoker takes 8 to 12 puffs from each cigarette over a period of 5-7 minutes, with each puff

delivering about 50-75 ml of smoke. This means they inhale 0.5 litre from a single cigarette. By contrast, hookah smokers inhale more often, and for longer periods and inhale as much as a litre of smoke with each puff. And because a session can go on for half-hour or more, smokers take as many as 50 to 200 puffs per session. This means they inhale 10 times as often as the typical cigarette smoker, and each inhalation contains as much as 10 times the amount of smoke obtained from an entire cigarette. Smoking hookah has become a social ritual for many people, shared with family, friends or co-workers. Hookah has been present in rural settings for generations, but in recent times, it has become an urban fad especially amongst the young. Many cities in India have been thankfully taking positive measures by banning hookah bars. Demystify this myth. Spread the word and put out the hookah!

Our doctors will answer all queries on emotional and mental health. Got mind trouble of your own? Drop us a mail at bpositiveQA@apollolife.com

Or write to

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