



EMETOPHOBIA

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INTRODUCTION

Emetophobia: Emetophobia is a condition where an individual fears vomiting or others vomiting. If you have emetophobia, you may fear vomiting alone or in public equally. You may frequently experience feeling sick but you are probably no more at risk of being sick than most people. Vomiting is associated with an overwhelming fear and panic. Some people fear losing control, becoming very ill or that others find you repulsive.

As a result you try too hard to avoid a wide range of situations and activities that you believe might increase of risk vomiting.

Why do humans and animals have to vomit?

Vomiting is an adaptive process that increases your chances of survival if you are ill. If you are infected, vomiting is beneficial and prevents disease by getting rid of toxins. Do you know the rat is the only animal that cannot vomit? This is

one reason why rat poison is so effective. However, the act of vomiting is a primitive reflex act that cannot be inhibited. People with emetophobia tend to focus on the risk of infection or food poisoning but the reflex can be triggered by a wide variety of triggers around the body (e.g. mechanically in gynaecological problems; by certain drug; extreme fear; severe pain; certain smells can all induce vomiting in the right context).

Common Coverage of Emetophobia

Specific phobias (e.g. insects, heights) are relatively common and in several large surveys occur in about 10% of the population. Of these surveys, only one study (Becker, et al, 2007) specifically asked about a phobia of vomiting and it was found to be relatively uncommon at 0.1% of the population. Many people with emetophobia are also too ashamed to talk about their problem. There have been other surveys that have asked about a fear of vomiting, which is relatively common at about 10% of the population.

Causes of Emetophobia

Emetophobia is much more likely to occur in women. Men with emetophobia are uncommon. Developing a specific phobia of vomiting is highly understandable given the way that humans (and animals) can become easily conditioned after food-poisoning or an infection and are more likely to avoid situations that remind them of vomiting. Vomiting as a baby or as a child could be very panic inducing (for example the association with the feeling of suffocating, choking or death).

Is linked with other Illness

You may feel demoralised or clinically depressed. Some people restrict their food believing that a range of food may cause vomiting. You may then become very underweight and some people with emetophobia may be misdiagnosed with anorexia. Progress of the condition Many people with emetophobia have a chronic condition. If left untreated, then the condition is likely to persist.

Peoples coping with Emetophobia

a) Avoiding adults or children who could be ill (and regarded as contagious) or who may be at risk of vomiting (e.g. drunks who remind you of

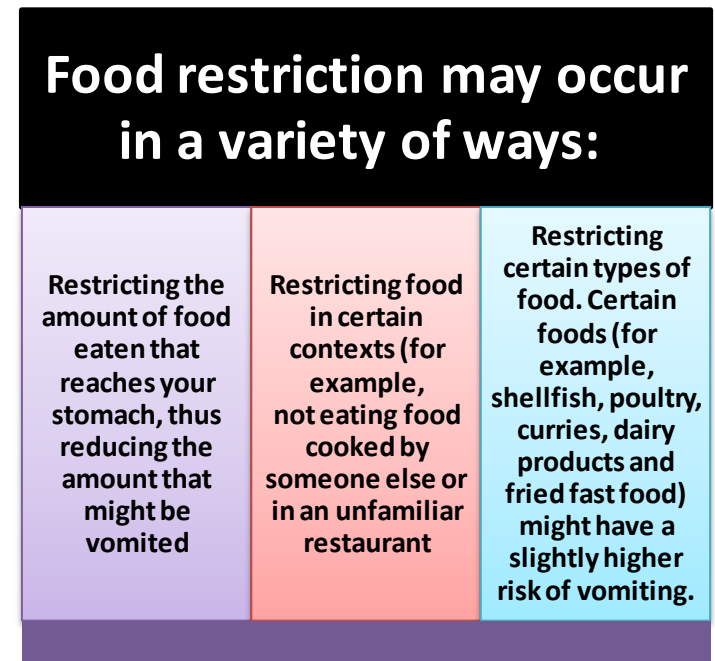
vomiting). The avoidance might extend to restricting activities of any children who may be in contact with other children.

b) Avoiding situations or activities such as going on holiday abroad; visiting ill people; travelling by boat or aeroplane; drinking alcohol in normal amounts etc.....

c) Avoiding food.

Food Restriction

Food restriction may occur in a variety of ways:



Alternatively, certain foods may have become associated with a past experience of vomiting. Restricting food may lead to being underweight, which may have a number of physiological consequences. These may be a further factor in increasing anxiety and nausea.

Treatments available

Current treatments described include cognitive behaviour therapy, hypnotherapy and medication. Cognitive Behaviour Therapy : CBT can be adapted for treating a Specific Phobia of Vomiting. There are no miracle cures - it is hard work on the part of the individual with emetophobia.



You may use safety seeking behaviours including compulsive checking and reassurance seeking



You may try to avoid thoughts and images of their self or others vomiting and feelings of nausea.



You are more vigilant for monitoring threats (e.g. people who could be ill or an escape route)



You become excessively self-focussed in order to monitor nausea



You worry, try to reassure yourself and mentally plan escape routes from others who might vomit



You may think in a magical way and neutralise the thoughts and images of vomit in a way you believe to stop yourself from vomiting

However they will have the unintended consequence of increasing the frequency of thoughts about vomiting and symptoms of nausea and make you more anxious in a vicious circle. The solution therefore involves some combination of (a) updating early memories of vomiting by using a technique called imagery rescripting and (b) gradually dropping your avoidance and safety seeking behaviours. There are no risks or side effects of CBT other than the experience of anxiety and old memories.

Hypnotherapy or neuro-linguistic programming

There is no evidence in the literature apart from one case study for the benefit of hypnotherapy in emetophobia. Please beware of unscrupulous commercial practitioners and if you chose this route, check that the practitioners belong to a recognised body such as the United Kingdom Council of Psychotherapy.

medication

Anti-nausea medication is often prescribed at the request of people with emetophobia.. There is a rationale for a type of medication called a selective serotonergic reuptake inhibitor (SSRI) in those with severe symptoms that overlap with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD) and who are unresponsive to cognitive behaviour therapy (CBT). Nausea is a potential side-effect of a SSRI which may mean that it is an unacceptable approach for some.

Conclusion

Emetophobia is caused by situational and emotional crisis for the children's and peoples. It is curable one if untreated leads to panic conditions. Handling the Emetophobia is not difficult for the professional, some of the therapies and medication are discussed above for treating the condition.

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