

No, You Don't Really Have That: 7 Conditions You Keep Misdiagnosing Yourself With

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You've seen your share of TV medical dramas and read enough "It happened to me!" health articles to figure out what's ailing you. A quick scroll through a symptom-checking website confirms your theory: "It says bloating and fatigue! That totally describes me!"

One study found that 35% of adults have [used the Internet to diagnose themselves](#) or others, but basing your conclusion on few vague symptoms may delay getting the right treatment and elicit unnecessary fear, says [Sandra Fryhofer](#), MD, an Atlanta-based internist and adjunct associate professor of medicine at Emory University School of Medicine. "Fatigue, for example, can be a symptom of just about anything—including doing late-night Google searches!" she says.

Any chronic concern should lead you straight to your real-life physician. To ease your mind in the meantime, we asked Fryhofer and other experts for some important facts about conditions that patients frequently think they have—but often don't. (Want your body to feel better? Then check out [The Power Nutrient Solution](#), the first-ever plan that tackles the root cause of virtually every major ailment and health condition today.)

Self-Diagnosis: Raynaud's Phenomenon

Why you suspect it: "My hands get ice cold and go numb when I'm outside in the winter."

What it could be: Numbness might be a side effect of a drug you're taking. "Certain medications, like beta-blockers, may trigger blood vessel constriction, as can smoking," says Fryhofer. Another possibility is carpal tunnel syndrome, which affects the nerves in the wrists; consider it an occupational hazard if you do

lots of typing or use tools that vibrate.

If you really have [Raynaud's](#), your hands will turn white or even blue and you'll lose sensation; as the blood flow returns, they'll begin to tingle or throb. This circulatory condition occurs when the muscles around the vessels in your hands (and sometimes in the toes) restrict blood flow. It can be uncomfortable, but it's usually harmless. Wearing thick gloves—especially on extra-frigid days—can help. But if you're experiencing joint pain, changes in skin texture, fatigue, or hair loss, book an appointment with your doctor.

MORE: [7 Reasons You're Tired All The Time](#)

Self-Diagnosis: OCD

Why you suspect it: "I'm a hand sanitizer junkie and can spend hours organizing my closet."

What it could be: If you laughingly refer to yourself as a germaphobe or a neat freak, it's unlikely that you have a full-blown disorder. "Almost all of us have some mild degree of obsessiveness," says Greg Hannahs, MD, a psychiatrist in New York City. "People who don't have OCD tend to like this aspect of themselves and even thrive on it."

True OCD (obsessive-compulsive disorder) involves much more than a desire to keep your house and hands clean. Sufferers find themselves with recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and turn to rituals (compulsions) that offer only temporary relief from the anxiety. They might compulsively clean, check door locks repeatedly, or count cracks on a sidewalk. Some will spend an hour or so a day engaged in obsessive-compulsive thinking and behaviors; for others, the condition can completely overtake their life. (Did you know that [picky eating may lead to OCD?](#))

Don't know if your personality quirks have crossed the line? [Go online and take](#) the Yale-Brown Obsessive Compulsive Scale (Y-BOCS). Then see a mental health professional for further guidance.

Self-Diagnosis: Rosacea

Why you suspect it: "I blush easily and my face turns bright red when I exercise."

What it could be: While rosacea is very common (it impacts 14 million Americans), [not everyone who sees red has it](#). A host of other conditions—including acne and contact dermatitis—can mimic the symptoms. Redness and irritation can also be a result of overzealous product use. "We see many patients whose red skin is caused by aggressive skin care, such as over-exfoliating," says David Bank, MD, a dermatologist in Mount Kisco, NY.

If you actually have rosacea, you won't see whiteheads or blackheads as you would with acne, and you won't have the kind of intense itching caused by contact dermatitis. Rosacea usually begins as a flushing or redness on the central portion of the face; over time, broken capillaries may appear on the surface of the skin.

The flushing associated with rosacea is often triggered by temperature changes, certain emotions, and eating spicy foods or drinking alcohol. Still not sure if it's rosacea? Try switching to a gentle fragrance-free cleanser and moisturizer, and lay off anti-aging products made with retinoids. If that doesn't help, it's time to talk to a dermatologist. (Here are [12 more ways to control your rosacea](#).)

MORE: [6 Weird Signs You're Not Getting Enough Iron](#)

Self-Diagnosis: Migraines

Why you suspect it: "I get terrible headaches."

What it could be: If your whole head is throbbing, it's probably a tension headache. "It feels like your head

is being squeezed," says Fryhofer.

Migraines typically affect only one side of the head and cause intense, pulsing pain that makes performing daily tasks difficult. Attacks may be accompanied by visual disturbances, nausea, vomiting, dizziness, and extreme sensitivity to sound, light, touch, and smell. Some sufferers experience neck stiffness or food cravings a day or two before a migraine occurs. (Here are 7 ways to [stop migraines before they start](#).)

Whether or not you're truly getting migraines, there's no doubt that bad headaches can mess with your well-being. To get to the root of the issue, Fryhofer suggests keeping a headache diary.

Possible culprits include hormonal changes (like around your period), exercise, or a lack of sleep. Food also plays a role: Red wine, chocolate, and aged cheeses may trigger migraines. If your headaches are becoming more frequent or growing in intensity, see a doctor, who may prescribe medication or recommend a special diet.

Self-Diagnosis: Gluten Intolerance/Celiac Disease

Why you suspect it: "I feel bloated when I eat lots of bread and pasta."

What it could be: It's very trendy to go gluten-free, but is this [protein \(found in wheat, rye, and barley\) actually making you sick](#)? Only 1% of the population suffers from celiac disease, an autoimmune disorder that makes it impossible to digest gluten. Left untreated, it can lead to dramatic weight loss, vitamin deficiencies, and chronic pain. "It's a very serious disease, damaging the lining of your intestines and causing anemia," says Fryhofer.

While celiac affects just 1 in 133 Americans, more than 10 times as many people shun bread, baked goods, crackers, and soy sauce because they think they're gluten intolerant. Yet a [study recently published](#) in the journal *Digestion* found that 86% of people who believed they were gluten sensitive could actually tolerate it.

So how do you know if giving up gluten will make a difference or if the benefits are all in your head? A blood test and perhaps endoscopy can determine whether or not you have celiac disease. Gluten intolerance is harder to pin down, though your doctor or a nutritionist might be able to help you sort it out. "If you generally feel better not eating wheat, go for it," says Fryhofer. Just know that gluten-free products don't offer any extra health benefits (and no, they won't help you lose weight). Some gluten-free diets are also deficient in fiber and a host of vitamins and minerals, so make sure you're eating healthy, well-balanced meals. (Here are [5 weird signs you have celiac disease](#).)

MORE: [10 Amazing Beauty Tricks With Coconut Oil](#)

Self-Diagnosis: Dandruff

Why you suspect it: "Every winter I become a total flake. Just look at my black sweaters!"

What it could be: You might have a case of simple dry scalp—which is exactly what it sounds like: "Basically, it's just dry skin that's occurring on the scalp," says Bank. Blame blustery winds, strong detergents, product buildup, or hard water.

If dryness is the culprit, your flakes will be translucent and you'll find them mostly in your hair rather than clinging to your scalp. True dandruff—which may be caused by an overgrowth of a harmless yeast—tends to have a thick texture and show up all over your scalp (in addition to in your hair and on your clothes). Your entire head will probably be itchy, not just a few sections.

Figuring out which type of flakes you have matters because the ingredients in "dandruff" shampoos (such as zinc pyrithione or salicylic acid) can make dry scalp worse. To ease a dehydrated scalp, wash hair in lukewarm (not hot) water and stick with hydrating shampoos, conditioners, and masks (try this [DIY](#)

[avocado and honey hair mask](#)).

Tea tree oil is also worth a try, as it helps regardless of what's causing your snowflakes. "It has an antifungal and antibacterial effect, which can help some of the causes of dandruff," says Bank. "It's also extremely moisturizing." Add four or five drops of tea tree oil to a cup of water and put in a spray bottle. Use the mixture instead of shampoo two to three times a week for 7 to 10 days. (Or try [sea salt](#).)

Self-Diagnosis: Hypothyroidism

Why you suspect it: "I'm always tired and can't lose weight."

What it could be: Unexplained weight gain can be a [depression symptom](#) or result from taking antidepressants. Other meds that can pack on pounds include beta-blockers, antiseizure drugs, and even some heartburn and migraine medications. Or maybe you're simply not eating properly or exercising enough, which can make you feel tired and cranky. (Here are signs your [thyroid is out of whack](#).)