

B1-B2 English Worksheet: The Nocebo Effect - 13 May 2026

Article

The nocebo effect happens when negative expectations make people feel ill. For example, a person may read about side effects before taking medicine. Later, they may feel sick, even if the medicine is harmless or the feeling has another cause. The symptoms are real, but they may come from fear, stress or expectation.

This does not mean people are pretending. The brain and body are closely connected. Worry can make pain feel stronger, and frightening words can make people notice every small change in their body. Doctors need to warn patients about risks, but they also need to explain information in a careful way.

The nocebo effect is important in modern life because people often look for health advice online. A scary story, a video or a long list of symptoms can make some people worry about their own health. Good information can help people stay calm, trust doctors and make better decisions.

True/False

Decide if each statement is True (T) or False (F).

1. The nocebo effect can make people feel ill.
2. The article says people are pretending when they have nocebo symptoms.
3. A person may feel sick after reading about side effects.
4. Worry can make pain feel stronger.
5. The article says the brain and body are not connected.
6. Doctors should never warn patients about risks.
7. People often look for health advice online.
8. Good information can help people stay calm.

Phrase Match

Match the phrases (1-10) to the correct definitions (A-J).

Phrases (1-10)	Definitions (A-J)
1. feel ill	A. joined or linked
2. read about	B. search for
3. come from	C. choose more wisely
4. connected	D. learn information by reading
5. feel stronger	E. be nervous about
6. warn patients	F. seem more powerful or serious
7. look for	G. not become upset
8. worry about	H. feel sick
9. stay calm	I. have as a cause or source
10. make better decisions	J. tell sick people about possible danger

Synonym Match

Match the words (1-10) to the correct synonyms (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. negative	A. treatment
2. expectations	B. cautious
3. medicine	C. signs
4. harmless	D. dangers
5. symptoms	E. bad
6. connected	F. confidence
7. risks	G. beliefs
8. careful	H. guidance
9. advice	I. linked
10. trust	J. safe

Use the new language

Choose 5 words or phrases from the worksheet and write your own sentences.

Discussion Questions

Student A

1. Have you ever worried after reading about symptoms online?
2. Do you usually read the side effects before taking medicine?
3. Can stress make people feel physically ill?
4. Do you trust health advice on the internet?
5. Should doctors explain all possible side effects?
6. What helps you stay calm when you feel unwell?
7. Do people in your country talk openly about stress and health?
8. Is it better to search online or talk to a doctor?

Student B

1. How can doctors give honest information without making people more afraid?
2. Why do some people trust online health stories more than doctors?
3. Can fear spread from one person to another?
4. Should social media websites control false health information more strictly?
5. Is the placebo effect more common now because people read so much online?
6. How can schools teach young people to understand health information better?
7. Is mental health connected to physical health in everyday life?
8. What is the best way to talk to someone who is very worried about their health?

Answer Key

True/False: 1=T, 2=F, 3=T, 4=T, 5=F, 6=F, 7=T, 8=T

Phrase Match: 1=H, 2=D, 3=I, 4=A, 5=F, 6=J, 7=B, 8=E, 9=G, 10=C

Synonym Match: 1=E, 2=G, 3=A, 4=J, 5=C, 6=I, 7=D, 8=B, 9=H, 10=F

Example sentences with the phrases

1. Some people feel ill after reading about side effects.
2. I do not like to read about every possible symptom.
3. A headache can come from stress or lack of sleep.
4. The mind and body are connected in many ways.
5. Fear can make pain feel stronger.
6. Doctors must warn patients, but they should use careful language.
7. Many people look for health information online.
8. It is easy to worry about small changes in your body.
9. Breathing slowly can help people stay calm.
10. Good advice can help people make better decisions.