



# Anxious much?

**PANIC ATTACKS:** DON'T LET ANXIETY KEEP YOU FROM LIVING YOUR LIFE

» Find a support group that suits your needs.

**I**t comes out of nowhere, I feel like I'm losing control ... Am I having a heart attack? I can't breathe properly! I am shaking, I feel like I'm going to die."

These intense experiences of overwhelming fear and discomfort are characteristic features of a panic attack. Other symptoms include heart palpitations, sweating, shaking, shortness of breath, feeling like one is choking, chest pain, nausea, dizziness, feeling detached from oneself or the environment, fear of losing control, fear of dying, numbness, and experiencing hot flushes.

Zane Wilson founder of Sadag says: "From not driving or going

to hairdressers or shops, banks or restaurants, my world became smaller and smaller. However after four weeks' treatment I was in control again, and I travel constantly and am back to living a totally normal life."

Panic Disorder involves recurrent unexpected panic attacks followed by fear of experiencing future panic attacks. Often people avoid the last places they had them in, i.e. on a highway or in a restaurant, in an empty house, and worry about the consequences of the panic attacks. Peter Mathlalela from Siyabuswa says, "They first started in taxis, and I couldn't even step inside a taxi, then in church, and many places like a shopping mall. I spoke to Zane at Sadag, and a few

## 250

**This is the number of Sadag depression and anxiety support groups across the country**

months later after treatment and medication, I even started a support group in my area."

This year, the South African Depression and Anxiety Group (Sadag), which was opened 21 years ago, will be launching a new anxiety and depression helpline sponsored by Adcock Ingram as a starting point for people seeking assistance and telephone guidance about

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## A few self-help tips:

1. Deep breaths, inhale through your nose, hold the breath, exhale through the mouth.
2. Avoid caffeine. Check your over-the-counter medication or scripts: Does it advise no caffeine or against adrenalin? No malaria medication without checking your dose. Be careful when you go to a dentist, tell your dentist you have panic and ask him to have non-adrenalin in stock for you.
3. Some of the weight loss drugs also should be avoided.
4. Educate yourself, know your illness so you can manage it effectively. Sadag's website has a lot of helpful advice.
5. Don't isolate yourself, join or form a social support network.
6. Always have two or three numbers you can call if you are in the middle of a panic attack. Remember your panic attacks do NOT last as long as you think, from the beginning of one to the end of it, time it, you will be surprised how few minutes it is.
7. Ask for help. You are not alone. Sadag will offer you referrals, resources and support.



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where to get help and treatment. This includes referrals to psychologists, psychiatrists, general practitioners, government clinics and hospitals, and support groups. Through creating understanding, Sadag aims to help prevent, treat and manage panic and anxiety, as well as other anxiety disorders such as social anxiety disorder/social phobia, obsessive compulsive disorder



(OCD) and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Helpful psycho-educational videos will be made available on the Sadag website, one by Dr Colinda Linde is already on the front page at [sadag.org](http://sadag.org)

CBT therapy is believed to be the best help there is: cognitive behavioural therapy. There are trained therapists all over South Africa. They are registered by medical aids and can be claimed for. Treatment takes a limited number of sessions of four to eight.

Sadag has over 250 depression and anxiety support groups across the country, which provide a safe environment, free from judgement, to discuss personal experiences, share stories, provide support, and learn from each member's personal experiences. Support groups re-

### info

- Call the Anxiety and Depression helpline on 080-070-8090.

assure people that they are not alone and that there are others who truly understand the impact of panic and anxiety.

"Panic attacks can be frightening, and they are serious, but they don't have to control you." Says Wilson: "Get help, take control back of your own life."

Empower yourself with knowledge, there are numerous online videos explaining what panic attacks are, how to deal with them, and how to prevent them from happening at [sadag.org](http://sadag.org). There you can also find questionnaires, self-help tips, articles and information if you would like to help a loved one.

**For more information**  
visit [sadag.org](http://sadag.org)

