

PANIC DISORDER

**MAKING MENTAL HEALTH
MATTER FOR EVERYONE**



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About Panic Attacks

Get to know your disorder

Panic Attacks involve short periods of terrifying fear, along with physical symptoms.

Your heart may pound, you may feel sick, dizzy, out of breath, scared, your fingers and legs may tingle, or have pain in your chest. These things can happen unexpectedly when there is no obvious reason to feel fear or panic. Most people with Panic Disorder feel scared about having another Panic Attack and avoid places in which they believe these attacks are likely to occur again

Panic Attack Symptoms



Trembling or Shaking



Fast heartbeat/Racing Heart



Chest Pain



Sweating



Headache



Shortness of Breath



A Sense of Danger



Hot Flashes, Cold Sweats



Tingling in Fingers & Toes



Fear of Dying



Feeling Frightened



Feeling Unreal/Detached

When do Panic Attacks occur?

Panic Attacks differ from person to person. Some people may have a Panic Attack then don't ever experience another, or you might find that you have them regularly, or several in a short space of time. You might notice that particular places, situations or activities seem to trigger Panic Attacks. Often triggers are associated with previous traumatic events. For example, they might happen every time you enter a shopping mall or ahead of a public presentation. Most Panic Attacks last between 5 to 20 minutes. They can come on very quickly, feel very scary but it does end

What is the Difference?

Anxiety - Intense, excessive and persistent worry and fear about everyday situations. Physical symptoms like stomach aches, headaches, increase in heart rates and hyperventilation may occur

Panic Attacks - A Panic Attack is a sudden strong feeling of fear that can happen anywhere, at any time. An attack usually passes in 5 to 10 minutes, but it can linger for hours. It can feel like you're having a heart attack or a stroke. Panic Attacks may happen several times a day

Panic Disorder - Panic Disorder is when you experience recurring Panic Attacks where you have terrifying and overwhelming feelings of fear even though you're not in any danger

What CAUSES Panic Attacks?

It's not known what causes Panic Attacks or Panic Disorder, but these factors may play a role:



- High level of stress
- Genetics (Someone in your family has it)
- Certain changes in the way parts of your brain function
- Phobias, Substance Abuse, or Depression
- Temperament that is more sensitive to stress or prone to negative emotions



Panic Attacks may come on suddenly and without any warning at first, but over time, they're usually triggered by certain situations.

- A serious illness or accident
- The death of a close friend
- Separation from family
- Divorce / Job loss
- The birth of a baby



Panic Disorder is treatable

Types of treatment

Many people experience symptom relief and improvement in their quality of life with the appropriate professional care. However, treatment success varies from person to person. Some people respond to treatment after a few weeks while others may take longer. An experienced Mental Health Professional will conduct a comprehensive assessment before discussing an individualised treatment plan.



Medication

Medication is prescribed after assessment and consultation with a Psychiatrist or GP. The goal of medication is to block Panic Attacks.

Medication is phased out with the guidance of a practitioner provided the frequency of Panic Attacks has slowed down or stopped.

Therapy

Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT) has been proven to be the most effective type of Psychotherapy for Panic. CBT teaches various techniques to help to break the link between



Relaxation Techniques

These techniques can help you slow down your thoughts, ease stress and anxiety, and counteract many of the cognitive and physical symptoms of Panic Disorder. Examples of relaxation techniques are meditation, yoga and mindfulness.



Preparing for your Appointment

- 1 Write down your symptoms, including when they first occurred and how often you've had them
- 2 Include key personal information, including traumatic events in your past and any stressful major events
- 3 Bring your medical history including a list of your medication (if you take any)
- 4 Have your questions prepared to ask

What to do during a Panic Attack?

- 1 **Try not to fight what you are feeling**
Often fighting feelings or pushing them away can actually increase your fear of Panic and give it more power. It is important to remind yourself that Panic is never permanent and it will pass after a few minutes.
- 2 **Control your breathing**
Controlling your breathing can be very effective when used when you start feeling the first signs of Panic. (Refer to the back for an easy method).
- 3 **Challenge your fear**
Ask yourself questions like, 'What do I know from my past experiences with Panic Attacks? Have I had these feelings before and did they harm or kill me? Did these feelings only last a few minutes?'
- 4 **Give yourself time**
Try not to rush yourself through Panic. Acknowledge your symptoms as just symptoms, remind yourself that you can separate how you feel from what you think or fear is happening.

How to Cope with a Panic Attack



Count Backwards from 100 in Threes



Time the Attack



Practise Slow Deep Breathing



Write Down your Thoughts



Listen to Music



Practise Mindfulness



Phone a Friend



Seek a Doctor's Help



Take a Walk to Clear your Mind



Avoid Smoking, Alcohol and Caffeine

Join a Support Group

Join a Support Group to help maintain your wellbeing. It is a group of people that share similar problems or experiences and are there to help and support each other

5 Finger Hand Breathing technique

- 1 Start by stretching your hand out with your fingers spread apart
- 2 With the index finger of the other hand, slowly trace the outside of your hand beginning with bottom of your thumb
- 3 Breathe in while tracing upwards and breathe out when tracing downwards
- 4 Continue this process until you reach your pinkie finger
- 5 Repeat until you feel centred 



Supporting Your Partner

Supporting a loved one living with Panic will help with their recovery. Here are some tips that might help you help them:

- Learn about Panic Disorder
- Encourage healthy behaviour, and avoid criticizing irrational fear or avoidance
- Help set specific goals that are realistic and can be approached one step at a time
- Don't assume you know what your partner needs. Ask how you can help. Listen carefully to the response

- Acknowledge that you don't understand the experience of a Panic Attack but you are there for their support
- Encourage treatment

Recovery

Recovery requires hard work on the part of the person with Panic Disorder and patience on the part of the partner and family. It may seem like a slow process, but the rewards are well worth it.



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