

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

PANIC DISORDER

Panic attacks involve short times of terrifying fear, along with many 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.

Treatment can help most people who have this illness. It is very important for the person who has panic disorder to get information about the problem, and the type of treatments that are able to help them.



WHO SUFFERS FROM PANIC DISORDER?

This disorder typically begins in young adulthood, but older people and children can be affected. Women are twice as likely to suffer from panic disorder than men. The disorder can be genetic.

SYMPTOMS

In the beginning, the first panic attack seems to come from nowhere. It can happen while a person is doing some everyday activity like being in a taxi, sitting at work or shopping. Suddenly, the person feels very frightened and terrified. This usually lasts for only a few minutes, but may feel longer.

The symptoms do disappear over an hour or so. People who have had a panic attack feel like they have been hit by some terrible illness or are "going crazy". Often people who are having a panic attack go to hospital for help in case it is a heart attack. The first panic attacks may occur when people are under a lot of stress from work or exams; after a trauma, or after the death of a family member.

The attacks may also follow surgery, a serious accident, illness or childbirth. Too much caffeine, the use of drugs or some medicines can also cause panic attacks.

ANXIETY SYMPTOMS

- Feeling frightened, scared
- Racing heart
- Chest pain
- Dizziness, feeling light headed
- Nausea
- Difficulty breathing
- Tingling and numbness in fingers, face and toes
- Hot flushes, cold sweats
- Feeling disoriented
- Fear of losing control, going 'crazy', or doing something embarrassing
- Fear of dying

COPING WITH PANIC

- Remember that although your feelings and symptoms are very frightening, they are not dangerous or harmful
- Understand that what you are feeling is only a very strong feeling of your body's normal reaction to stress
- Don't fight your feelings or try to wish them away, the more you are willing to deal with them the less frightening they will become
- Concentrate on the present, where are you and who is with you. Remember that you are fine. Don't worry about what might happen to you. Get help and read about your illness
- Focus on an carry out simple things: talk to a friend, neighbour or co-worker; concentrate on counting backwards from 100 in 2s; smell a flower, or snap a rubber band to bring you back to the present

SETBACKS

If, after a time of feeling better, you suddenly have another panic attack, don't worry. After having suffered from panic attacks it is only natural that the attacks won't disappear all at once. In time, attacks will be less severe and you will learn not to be scared of them. There will be longer times between attacks before they stop altogether.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

CAN AFFECT ANYBODY AT ANY TIME



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HELPLINE

0800 21 22 23 www.sadag.org

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Many South Africans of all races, ages, sex, and cultures can suffer from depression and anxiety.

If you are one of these people, you are not alone. There is help for you.

DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Did you know that most people with depression don't get treatment? 1 in 10 people will suffer from depression at some point in their lives but only a quarter get help - even though treatment can take the depression away.

People often don't seek help because:

- Depression is often not seen as a real illness
- Many people blame themselves and think they are weak
- People are scared and too embarrassed to ask for help
- Depression is often confused with other illnesses

DEPRESSION SIGNS

- Feeling sad, anxious or "empty" most of the time
- Loss of interest or pleasure in hobbies and activities that were once enjoyed
- Feeling hopeless about life
- Feeling helpless or guilty
- Changes in sleeping habits
- Weight loss or weight gain
- Loss of energy, feeling "slow" or fatigued
- Thoughts of death or suicide, suicide attempts
- Restlessness, irritability, anger
- Difficulty concentrating, remembering things or making decisions
- Physical symptoms that don't respond to treatment, such as headaches, stomach pain, back pain, chest pain, even if it was checked by a doctor

NOT EVERYONE EXPERIENCES ALL OF THESE SYMPTOMS. SOME PEOPLE ONLY HAVE A FEW SYMPTOMS, OTHERS MAY HAVE MANY.



CAUSES OF DEPRESSION

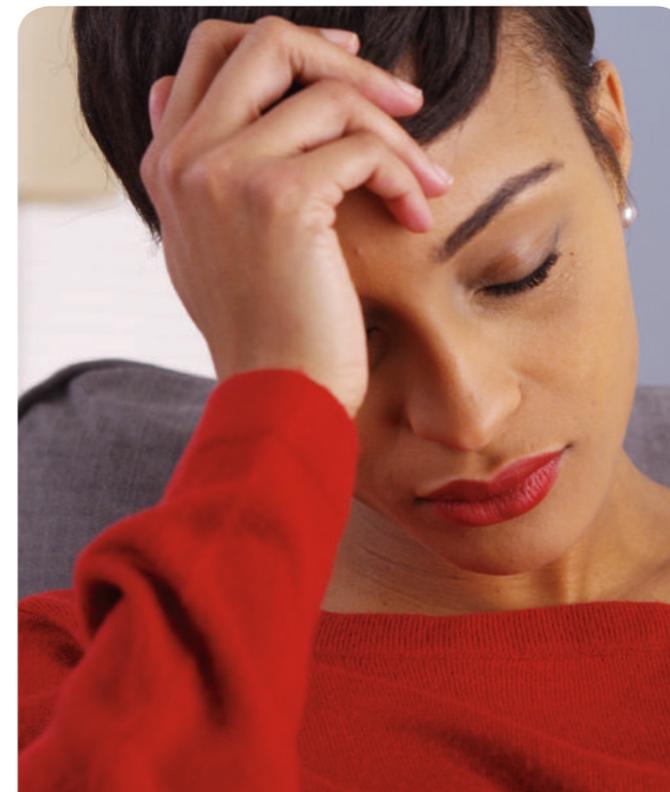
Depression has many possible causes and is often brought on by a mixture of different factors. Sometimes a specific event may lead to depression; other times depression comes on for no apparent reason that you can see, even for people whose lives are going well. Some possible reasons include:

EXTERNAL EVENTS:

- The break-up of a relationship, a traumatic event, financial worries, loneliness, legal problems, retirement, and grief can all result in depression.

FAMILY HISTORY:

- Having a close family with depression means you are more likely to have depression as well.
- Depression can be caused by a chemical imbalance in the brain.
- Medical illness - like stroke, diabetes, HIV/AIDS, TB and others - can also trigger depression.
- Some medications or treatments can cause depression or make depression worse.



BIPOLAR SYMPTOMS

- Irritable angry mood
- Thinking very fast and talking so fast that others cannot understand you
- Little need for food
- Feelings of power, greatness
- Reckless behaviour with no thought of what might happen
- Spending too much money
- Risky sexual behaviour (no condom use, multiple partners)
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Seeing or hearing things aren't there (in extreme cases)

TREATMENTS:

Depression is one of the most treatable mental illnesses and 8 out of 10 people get totally better. You will need to have a complete medical checkup to make sure there are no other medical causes for how you are feeling.

ANTI-DEPRESSANTS:

80% of people with depression will make good recovery on antidepressants. If one medicine doesn't work for you, try another one. Antidepressants do not work quickly - for most people it takes 2-3 weeks to start feeling better. It is very important not to stop taking the pills and to give them a full chance of working.

They may cause mild side effects like a dry mouth, sickness, headache or dizziness but these usually pass in a week or two. Never mix medications of any kind - prescription ones from the hospital, or ones from the pharmacy or ones you have borrowed - you must consult your doctor first. Always tell your doctor if you are pregnant or have any other illness like HIV and Aids.

Call your doctor if you have a question about any medicine or go to the clinic if you have a problem.

PSYCHOTHERAPY OR TALK THERAPY:

Psychotherapy or talk therapy with a psychologist, social worker or counsellor gives people the skills to cope with their illness and the stress it causes.

SUPPORT GROUPS:

Support groups are a very good way to get support and advice from people who know how you feel because they have felt the same way themselves. Support groups are run by patients for other patients as a safe place where you can share experiences and help. (Call SADAG 0800 21 22 23 for contacts in your area).

SELF HELP:

Self-help empowers you to cope better with your illness so that you can get well faster and stay healthy longer.

SELF-HELP TIPS:

- Understand what depression is - the more you know, the better you will cope.
- Do things to keep your mind busy - it can be of great help if the mind can be occupied by an interest or hobby or by reading a book or watching a TV programme or film.
- Avoid substances like smoking, drugs, and alcohol.
- Break large tasks into small ones and do what you can as you feel able to, do something small every day.
- Try to be with other people and talk about how you feel; it is usually better than being alone and secretive.
- Don't hide away or stay alone. See people, do things that make you feel better like going to a movie, sports match, or having tea with a friend.
- Remember: Depression is an illness and the way you feel is caused by the illness.
- Let your family and friends help you. Don't be afraid to ask for help if you need it.
- Expect your mood to improve slowly, feeling better takes time.

