



Panic Attacks and Panic Disorder

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What is Panic Disorder?

Panic Disorder is a type of Anxiety Disorder. People with Panic Disorder have “panic attacks”. During these attacks people have strong physical feelings and may think they are having a heart attack or may feel like they are losing control or “going crazy”.

Panic attacks can happen at any time. An attack usually lasts for a few minutes. Some symptoms may last longer.

People who have Panic Disorder often worry about when the next panic attack will happen. They may avoid places where they think they will have a panic attack. Sometimes the worry is so strong they are afraid to leave their home.

Not all people who have panic attacks develop Panic Disorder. People with Panic Disorder often also have depression or drug and alcohol problems.

What causes Panic Attacks?

- There are no clear reasons why a panic attack happens. Family history, brain chemistry and stressful life circumstances can play a big part.

Signs and Symptoms?

- Racing or uneven heart rate
- Sweating
- Feeling short of breath
- Shaking or trembling
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Feeling like you are choking
- Feeling dizzy, unsteady or lightheaded
- Nausea or feeling sick to your stomach
- Feeling detached from yourself or reality
- Feeling hot or cold

* If you have any of these symptoms see a doctor.

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What are the treatments?

Panic Disorders respond very well to treatment.

There are many types of treatments that can be used:

- Psychotherapy
- Medication
- Relaxation skills

The type of therapy considered to be most effective is Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). A combination of medication and therapy is most helpful. Some people can recover fully with treatment. Others need long-term therapy to feel better and prevent the return of symptoms.