

Panic Attacks



Human beings experience panic when they are in a situation of danger, triggering a normal “fight or flight” instinct to help them get out of a situation that is potentially life-threatening.

A panic attack, however, is a sudden surge of overwhelming fear that arises without a distinct situation

of danger. It is far more intense than a common feeling of being “stressed out”. Some people feel as though they are suffocating, or having a heart attack, or fear they are dying. While terrifying and stressful, a panic attack is not dangerous and will go away on its own.

Symptoms

- Racing heartbeat
- Difficulty breathing, feeling as though you “can’t get enough air”, choking
- Terror that is almost paralyzing
- Dizziness, lightheadedness or nausea
- Trembling, sweating, shaking
- Chest pains
- Flushing or sudden chills
- Tingling in fingers or toes (“pins and needles”)
- Fear that you’re about to die or you’re losing touch with reality



A panic attack is marked by the following conditions:

- Occurs suddenly, without warning
- Level of fear is extremely high, without any environmental threat or danger
- Passes within a few minutes; the body cannot sustain the “fight or flight” response for a long period of time, however, repeated attacks may continue to recur for hours

Panic Disorder

A panic disorder is marked by repeated and unexpected panic attacks. People who are suffering from panic disorder typically fear they are going to experience more panic attacks, and as a result they avoid people, places, and situations that they have identified as potential triggers for a panic attack.

Panic disorder can be caused by, or can cause, phobias and other mental health challenges.

Treatment

If you are, or suspect that you may be, experiencing panic attacks, a mental health professional can help you build strong, positive coping strategies to resolve the challenges and regain control of your life.

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Sources

- Canadian Mental Health Association. (2016). Phobias and panic disorders. Retrieved from: http://www.cmha.ca/mental_health/phobias-and-panic-disorders/
- National Institute of Mental Health. (2016). Panic disorder. Retrieved from <http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>
- Statistics Canada. (2015). Panic disorder. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/82-619-m/2012004/sections/sectionb-eng.htm#a4>

Are You Living with a Mental Health Condition?

- Between chronic joint pain, frequent medical problems, and hospital visits, the bleeding disorders population is susceptible to mental health problems.
- It is important to understand that medical treatment of your hemophilia alone does not automatically translate into better quality of life. Psychosocial support is also an important part of comprehensive care for people with hemophilia.
- The first step is to be aware of the various symptoms of mental health issues that may impact you, as well as possible treatment

strategies. If you feel that you are experiencing a mental health issue, you are not alone. Reach out to your healthcare team and get the support you need to live your best life.

References:

- World Federation of Hemophilia. Psychological care for people with hemophilia. Accessed March 3, 2021 at <http://wwwl.wfh.org/publications/files/pdf-1198.pdf>
- National Hemophilia Foundation. Mental Health. Accessed March 3, 2021 at <https://www.hemophilia.org/educational-programs/education/mental-health>