

PANIC ATTACKS

Panic attacks are sudden and intense episodes of fear or anxiety that cause both physical and mental symptoms.



PANIC!

WHAT DOES A PANIC ATTACK FEEL LIKE?



When you have a panic attack you may experience any or all of the following sensations:



BREATHLESSNESS OR FEELING LIKE YOU'RE STRUGGLING TO BREATHE OR CHOKING



HOT FLUSHES OR CHILLS



SWEATING: PROFUSE SWEATING, EVEN IF IT'S NOT HOT.



A RACING OR POUNDING HEARTBEAT



PAIN IN YOUR CHEST OR STOMACH



TINGLING FINGERS



FEELING SICK, FAINT, DIZZY OR NAUSEOUS



SHIVERING OR SHAKING LIMBS



FEELING LIKE YOU'RE NOT CONNECTED TO YOUR BODY

This can be frightening, but remember that panic attacks aren't dangerous, in fact they are your brain trying to keep you safe and they will pass.

Panic attacks usually last between 5 and 20 minutes. Symptoms usually peak within 10 minutes and then start to fade.

WHAT CAUSES PANIC ATTACKS?



As with many mental health conditions, the exact cause of panic disorder is not fully understood. But it's thought to be linked to a combination of things, including:



An imbalance of neurotransmitters (chemical messengers) in the brain.



Having a close family member with panic disorder



A traumatic or very stressful life experience, such as a bereavement

WHAT CAN I DO DURING A PANIC ATTACK?

Remember you're not alone in dealing with panic attacks. If you are suffering from regular panic attacks it's important to seek professional help.



Breathe

Focusing on breathing slowly and deeply can help you manage rapid breathing or anxious feelings. Go to breathe in our A-Z of Wellbeing or enjoy one of our mindfulness videos.



Find an object to focus on

Select an object within your view and observe it closely. As you describe every detail of the object to yourself, you may find that your panic diminishes.



Recognise this is a panic attack

Remind yourself that this will pass. Tell yourself that you are ok and that you can handle this.



Go to your happy place

Picture yourself in your favourite place, dive into the detail of how it looks, sounds, smells, feels, even tastes.



Don't run away

Stay where you are if you can. Leaving might mean you start to fear the place you had the panic attack and avoid it in future.



Try a grounding exercise

This can help if you feel out of touch with your body or surroundings. One technique is to name five things you can see, four things you can touch, three things you can hear, two things you can smell, and one thing you can taste.



PRACTICAL WAYS TO HELP YOURSELF



Practise breathing exercises regularly. They can help prevent panic attacks and help while they're happening too.



Have a go at mindfulness, which involves being fully present and engaged in the moment. If it works for you, do more of it!
Go to the A-Z for some guided mindfulness videos.



Consider participating in a peer support group. These groups connect individuals who share similar experiences, allowing them to support each other and build new connections.



Physical activity produces endorphins (happy brain chemicals) which alleviate stress and anxiety.



Steer clear of caffeine, alcohol, and nicotine which all rev up the sympathetic nervous system.



Eating regular healthy meals can keep your blood sugar stable which will boost your energy and mood.

Support groups



Panic disorder can make life feel really difficult, but support is available. Work with a therapist, speak to other people with the same condition, or connect with a charity. You can find our recommended specialists [HERE](#).

You may find the following links useful:

- [Anxiety UK](#)
- [The Clear Fear App](#)
- [No Panic](#)
- [Anxend](#)



You might want to discuss with your parents whether you feel the services offered by this site can help you.