

# Panic Disorder



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Panic disorder is when an individual has an uncontrollable and terrifying response to ordinary, nonthreatening situations. This response is known as a panic attack. Many with panic disorder "fear the fear," meaning they worry about when the next attack is coming.

## What are the symptoms?

Panic attacks usually last 5-10 minutes. In some cases, they can be an hour. Some people may feel like they are dying or losing control or losing their mind. The symptoms of a panic attack include some of the following:

- Sweating
- Hot or cold flashes
- Choking or smothering sensations
- Change in heartrate and breathing
- Trembling and chest pains
- Faintness or numbness
- Nausea or confusion

## What are some effects of panic disorder?

Some ways that panic disorder effects those that have it are:

- Difficulties in relationships, or at work/school.
- Alcohol and drug use, such as using alcohol or drugs to try to manage fear.
- Suicidal thoughts or action if panic disorders are not treated
- Agoraphobia, which is an intense fear of being trapped in a public place, may develop.
- Other mental illnesses, those with panic disorder are at increased risk of developing other mental illnesses.

## What are the causes?

Although scientists have not found a single gene linked to panic attacks, it is thought that there is indeed a gene are a reason for panic disorder. There are several factors that can cause a panic disorder:

- Chemical or hormonal imbalances
- Drugs or alcohol
- Lack of sleep
- High levels of stress
- Other medical illnesses

## Treatments

A physical evaluation should be done first by a medical professional to make sure that there is no underlying medical condition. Panic attacks can often be confused for a heart attack or respiratory problem. Recovery from panic disorder can be achieved by:

- **Medication**, such as antidepressants and anti-anxiety medications
- **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)**
- **Healthy living practices**, such as aerobic exercise, a balanced diet, decreased use of caffeine and alcohol can help decrease symptoms

- **Reducing stress**, through meditation and mindfulness