



Panic Syndrome

Panic disorder is a type of anxiety disorder. It's characterized by unexpected and repeated episodes of intense fear. Panic disorder usually does not affect children before the teenage years. An estimated 2.3% of adolescents had panic disorder, and 2.3% had severe impairment. The prevalence of panic disorder among adolescents was higher for females (2.6%) than for males 2.0%. Although individual panic attacks are common, panic attacks that occur repeatedly are rare.

A panic attack can include severe physical symptoms that may include:





Panic Symptoms



- Abdominal distress
- Chest pain
- Shortness of breath
- Choking sensations
- Heart palpitations
- Dizziness
- Trembling

There can also be an intense fear of dying, going crazy, losing control, or feeling like one needs to “escape”. In the beginning, panic attacks come on suddenly and without warning.

It's not known what causes panic attacks but over time, they're usually triggered by certain situations. A traumatic or very stressful life experience, such as bereavement. Genetics, sensitivity to stress, being prone to negative emotions, or changes in the way parts of your brain function all can contribute to having a panic disorder.





Panic Treatments

Panic symptoms resemble symptoms of other serious health problems, such as a heart attack, so it's important to get evaluated by your primary care provider if you aren't sure what's causing your symptoms.

Panic disorder is generally treated with psychotherapy, medication, or both. Cognitive-behavioral therapy can help one learn how to change behaviors and thoughts that bring on panic attacks.

Doctors prescribe medications to treat panic disorder. Different types of medication can be effective, including:

- Antidepressants, like selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) or serotonin and norepinephrine reuptake inhibitors (SNRIs)
- Benzodiazepines, are sedatives that affect your central nervous system. These aren't used for long because you can get dependent on them.





Treatments

Anti-anxiety medications like benzodiazepines, work better in the short term.

Both medications and cognitive-behavioral therapy can take time to be effective.

Cutting back on caffeine, regular exercise, limiting alcohol consumption, and deep breathing exercises can lessen the frequency of panic attacks. Although panic attacks themselves aren't life-threatening, they can be frightening and significantly affect one's quality of life.

