

What is Panic Attack

Contributed by Webmaster

By David Smith

Panic attack is a period of intensive fear that is often abrupt and is often a sign of mental and emotional distress.

In some individuals they appear without apparent cause and most often the distressed individual reports losing control of oneself. Often they are provoked or triggered by a sense of trying to escape from someone or from the place where the attack started. Although in normal cases, the individual when subjected to a stimulus often resorts to a fight syndrome as a form of protection, in panic attacks, the individual employs the flight syndrome. Often episodes of panic attack come with chest pain and shortness of breath with a tunnel vision even after seeking medical advice or attention.

Panic attack is different from other anxiety disorders because of its sudden intensity and its occurrence in individuals. Often panic attacks are psychological conditions but may not be a sign of a mental disorder. At least in normal individuals, a panic attack may occur in a year particularly in persons with anxiety and phobias. As a result of a triggering factor, they are often short-lived and will subside once the triggering factor is eliminated. In some individuals exposed to a panic attack, one attack may trigger another leading to a nervous breakdown.

Scientific studies point out to the imbalance of serotonin and norepinephrine as the culprits in the incidence of panic attacks where the neurological function is subjected to a chemical imbalance. Often genetics play a role in the disorder and has been found to run in families.

Common symptoms include trembling, palpitations, and shortness of breath, sweating, nausea, dizziness, hyperventilation and tingling sensations. Others develop a sense of being choked or smothered. In repeated and unprovoked panic attacks a sign or manifestation of a panic disorder may ensue. However panic attacks are also associated with other common anxiety disorders like in persons with phobias whose exposure to their feared object or scenario trigger an attack.

Panic attacks are potentially disabling, but it can be controlled. The various symptoms of a panic attack are often mistaken as a cardiac attack or a life-threatening medical illness. This misconception often increases the incidence of future panic attacks. People often submit to the hospital emergency rooms when they are having a panic attack, and extensive medical tests are performed to rule out other conditions, which creates further anxiety.

Treatment for panic attacks includes medications and psychotherapy. Normally the mental health practitioners assisting you in the treatment of panic disorder are psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers. To submit for a medical treatment for panic disorder however, one should visit a psychiatrist. Psychotherapy may be provided by a clinical or counseling psychologist. Medications can also be used to break any psychological connection between a specific phobia and panic attacks.

Common medications prescribed are antidepressants or anti-anxiety drugs in anticipation or during a panic attack.

Some psychologists believe that usual exposure to the phobia trigger with medical assistance can often break the phobia-panic pattern, allowing people to gradually adjust to the stressor without the help of medications. However, minor phobias that develop as a result of a panic attack can be prevented without medication through behavioral therapy or simply by assisted exposure.

Under a combination of therapy and medications, the best results are often seen. For some, a fair improvement may be noticed in a short period of less than 8 weeks. Finding the right pair of medications and mental health professional takes

more effort. Appropriate treatment by an experienced professional can often prevent panic attacks or at least reduce its severity and frequency.

Other panic attacks caused by an underlying emotional problem like depression, alcoholism and drug addiction are more frequent in people with panic disorder. The underlying problem needs to be treated before the total panic disorder is completely or at least partially eliminated.

Most less severe and less recurrent attacks submitted to the emergency rooms are advised to breath in paper bags to help boost the carbon dioxide levels in the body.

David Smith is the owner of Keyboard Books. You can find out more about Panic Attacks by going to <http://www.panicattacks.keyboardbooks.com>