

What might my GP do?

Your GP will ask you about your panic attacks including when they happen and what triggers them. They may offer you antidepressants or a course of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT), either via a computer or in person. You can refer yourself for CBT. To do this, and to find out more about the diagnosis and treatment of panic attacks, see:

www.nhs.uk/conditions/panic-disorder



Concerns and complaints

We aim to provide you with a high quality service at all times. However, if you have any concerns, complaints or comments about your experience of our service then please tell a member of the team or contact the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on freephone 0800 328 7971.

If you would like to have information translated into a different language, please contact the Equality and Diversity Team at: EqualityandInclusion@oxfordhealth.nhs.uk

Arabic يُرجى الاتصال بنا إذا كنتم ترغبون في الحصول على المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بتسبيق مختلف.

Bengali আপনি এই তথ্য অন্য ভাষায় বা আলাদা আকারে পেতে চাইলে অনুগ্রহ করে আমাদের সাথে যোগাযোগ করুন।

Urdu اگر آپ یہ معلومات دیگر زبان یا مختلف فارمیٹ میں چاہتے ہیں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے رابطہ کریں۔

Chinese 若要以其他語言或格式提供這些資訊，請與我們聯繫

Polish Aby uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, skontaktuj się z nami.

Portuguese Queira contactar-nos se pretender as informações noutro idioma ou num formato diferente.

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Oxford Health
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Emergency Department Psychiatry
Service (EDPS)

Panic attacks

Coping strategies and
where to get help

Having a panic attack?

A panic attack is worst in the first 10 minutes and typically lasts 30-45 minutes. It will pass without any treatment.

Focus on your breathing:

- Often during a panic attack people breathe very fast (hyperventilate), which can make you feel worse. Breathe slowly in for 5 seconds and out for 5 seconds until you feel calmer.
- Tummy (abdominal) breathing can help. Place a hand on your tummy and push it out as far as possible as you breathe slowly in; draw it in as you breathe out. This can make your breathing more efficient and make you feel calmer.

Focus on your senses:

- Chew flavoured gum or sweets
- Wrap yourself in a coat or blanket and focus on the weight of it around you, or if it is safe to, take off your shoes and walk barefoot, focusing on the feeling of the ground beneath your feet

Call the Samaritans on 116 123 if you feel panicky and want to talk to someone.

What are panic attacks?

Panic attacks happen when your body thinks it senses a threat. It gears up to respond to the threat by activating its 'fight-or-flight' response which may make your heart race, make you feel short of breath, sick or dizzy, or make you sweat or feel hot or cold, among other symptoms.

Panic attacks can feel so intense that people think they are about to die. They can be distressing, and the anticipation of having a panic attack can also be frightening.

Although these symptoms feel very real, there is no physical problem causing them. If you have seen a doctor and have been given a diagnosis of a panic attack, or panic disorder, there is no need to worry about an underlying physical health problem.



Find out more about panic attacks

- www.nhs.uk
- www.patient.info
- www.mind.org.uk
- www.nopanic.org.uk

See www.mentalhealth.org.uk/publications for a downloadable booklet, *How to Overcome Fear and Anxiety*, which has more information about panic attacks and resources for support.

After you've had a panic attack

If you have a family member or friend you feel able to tell, let them know you had a panic attack so you can talk to them if you need to

You may feel tired after a panic attack. Take care of yourself and try to do something that relaxes you.

Download an app:

- Beat Panic—digital flashcards with soothing images and messages
- Stress & Anxiety Companion—breathing exercises and relaxing music

Ring a number for future support and information about panic attacks and other mental health problems:

- Mind's infoline on 0300 123 3393
- Anxiety UK's helpline on 03444 775 774 (this is not a free number; alternatively you can email support@anxietyuk.org.uk for free.)

Will this happen again?

Some people don't ever have another panic attack again. Some go on to have future panic attacks. If you get frequent panic attacks that are affecting your day-to-day life, see your GP. It can be helpful to write down your symptoms and when they happen and show this to your GP.