

# [Panic attacks](https://assignbuster.com/panic-attacks/)

Panic attacks are a frightening thing to experience—especially if you have never had one before. They are often triggered by a small event, such as someone cutting you off in traffic or a stressful telephone call. If you do not know that what you are experiencing is a panic attack, you may mistake it for something far worse, like a heart attack. On the other extreme, you may actually find yourself trying to ignore a panic attack, thinking it is just a case of “ nerves. ” The truth is that panic attacks, left untreated can lead to more severely debilitating disorders.

People who experience panic attacks often sink into depression. Anything from a mild depression to bipolar disorder can be the result. Untreated panic attacks can affect one physically as well. For example, prolonged stress can indeed lead to heart conditions. How do you know that you are having a panic attack and not just experiencing stress? Some of the symptoms include: sudden shaking, shortness of breath, a sudden fit of crying that you may not be able to stop, tension in the muscles, a “ heavy” feeling on the chest, elevated heart rate and/or blood pressure, nausea and a flushed or suddenly cool feeling.

You may experience any or all of these symptoms. The American Psychological Association defines a panic attack as “ a sudden surge of overwhelming fear that comes without warning and without any obvious reason” (APA). The lack of an obvious reason for the attack is often why people do not realize what is happening. A minor stressor or none at all, are not generally seen as reasons for having such a severe mental and physical reaction. This is why the symptoms are often mistaken for a far more acute condition. One of the most common effects of panic disorder is that the person with the panic attacks becomes afraid.

They are actually afraid of the panic attack happening again, but they feel that they have no way to avoid the attack other than to avoid the situation they were in when the attack occurred. A person who is driving or at work when the attack was triggered will find that the situation is one that is hard to avoid. “ In worst case scenarios, people with panic disorder develop agoraphobia—fear of going outdoors—because they believe that by staying inside, they can avoid all situations that might provoke an attack” (APA). Clearly, left untreated panic attack disorder can become a life altering condition.

But it does not have to be that way. The best person to diagnose and help you deal with panic disorder is your doctor. Your doctor can determine if it is truly panic attack disorder that you are experiencing. They can refer you to a psychologist or psychiatrist. They also have access to many prescription drugs that may be able to help you. Only your doctor should diagnose and help to determine the course of treatment for your condition. People who try to treat panic attack disorder on their own, or who try to ignore it, can actually worsen the problem.

Usually, the best way to treat panic attack disorder is with a combination of psychological and physical therapies. For example, your doctor may prescribe sedatives, antidepressants or in more extreme cases, antipsychotic medication. In addition, they will probably have the patient undergo a course of therapeutic sessions with a counselor. This way both the physical symptoms and the mental causes of the attacks are addressed. Some people get lasting relief with only a short course of treatment—usually someone whose panic disorder was caused by a recent psychological trigger, such as a divorce or loss of a job.

Others whose panic disorder is due to physical reasons (I. e. hereditary factors) may need long term treatment and counseling. One thing that the American Psychological Association makes clear is that no one needs to let panic attack disorder destroy their lives. What was once considered something that was “ all in your head” is now understood as a real and treatable condition. You can get help and there is a lot of help available. A happy, normal life waits for those who suffer with panic disorder. All they have to do is recognize the symptoms and get treatment.