



Panic Disorder Fact Sheet

The Facts

A panic attack is a feeling of intense fear when there is no real threat or danger.¹ An attack typically lasts 10-20 minutes but can last up to an hour or more. Panic disorder is an anxiety disorder that is characterized by recurring panic attacks and intense distress about their possible return. This can lead to youth avoiding situations or activities and may limit functioning in severe cases. While panic disorder can be experienced at any age, it most commonly occurs during adolescence.²

The Warning Signs

- Intense fearfulness (a sense that something terrible is happening)
- Racing or pounding heartbeat
- Dizziness, lightheadedness, nausea, sweating
- Shortness of breath or a feeling of being smothered
- Trembling or shaking
- Feeling that the world is unreal
- Sudden and overwhelming fear of death or losing control

Support & Treatment

Once physical health conditions are ruled out, exploring options for mental health treatment is essential. Mental health treatment for panic disorder is often effective and consists of psychotherapy and medication.² Left untreated, panic disorder can lead to depression, substance abuse, and other problems.

Key Components of treatment include:

- Case management
- Family support and education
- Psychotherapy
- Medication management
- Supported education and employment
- Peer support

¹ KidsHealth 2020. Retrieved from: <https://kidshealth.org/KidsHealthDemo/en/parents/az-panic-disorder.html>

² Child Mind Institute, 2020: Retrieved from <https://childmind.org/guide/panic-disorder>