



MANAGING A PANIC ATTACK

WHAT IS A PANIC ATTACK?

Panic attacks are sudden onset moments of fear and/or discomfort that escalate and reach their peak within minutes. They are often differentiated from other anxiety symptoms by the high intensity and short duration of the attack.

These attacks can happen in calm or anxious states and have specific symptoms to identify; however, these symptoms are very similar to other anxiety symptoms and those of a heart attack.

Panic attacks are usually quick and pass in a short amount of time, typically a few minutes. Some heart attacks are intense and quick, but most start slowly with mild discomfort and do not go away without being treated by a medical professional.



More than 1 in 5 people experience a panic attack during their lifetime. Panic attacks can be extremely uncomfortable and frightening. However, panic attacks pass and can be managed



SIGNS & SYMPTOMS



PANIC ATTACK

VS.

HEART ATTACK

Accelerated Heart Rate
Pounding Heart
Heart Palpitations
Sweating
Shaking
Dizziness
Shortness of Breath
Smothering Sensations
Feelings of Choking
Chest Pain
Nausea
Chills
Hot Flashes
Numbness
Tingling Sensation
Fear of Losing Control
Fear of Dying

Sudden Cardiac Arrest
Chest Pain Lasting Longer Than a Few Minutes
Shortness of Breath
Cold Sweats
Nausea
Heart Burn
Dizziness
Pain or Discomfort in Other Parts of the Body:
One or both arms
Neck
Back
Jaw
Stomach

WHAT TO DO IF YOU ARE EXPERIENCING A PANIC ATTACK

1. Reference the symptom and signs comparison to determine that you are experiencing a panic attack and reassure yourself that it will pass.
2. Practice breathing techniques such as breathing in through your nose for 5 seconds and out through your mouth for 5 seconds.
3. Focus on your breathing by closing your eyes. Try to relax your body while you tune in to your 5 senses to help ground you.
4. Once the attack is over and you feel better, consult with a healthcare professional to help prevent and manage future attacks.

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DAY AFTER A PANIC ATTACK

Once the panic attack has passed, it's common to feel anxious, tired, or even embarrassed. Before you return to work, take a few minutes for self-care to help your recovery. Self-care can also help reduce anxiety when practiced regularly. Here are some ideas:



Practice positive self-talk by writing down and saying personal affirmations out loud.

Ex: "I am in control of my anxiety." "I am calm."



Talk to someone supportive. Reaching out to someone who will listen can help reduce feelings of anxiety. No-cost support options that are available 24/7 include the US Text Line (text HOME to 741741) and your company's EAP.



Refocus your thoughts on something calm or something that brings you joy.

Ex: Take a short walk outside. Listen to music in your car. Write 3 things you are grateful for. Meditate. Read a chapter in a book.

When you are ready, safely return to work. If you do not feel ready to return, consult with your manager or HR about what to do next.

If you are experiencing a heart attack, can't determine if you are having a heart attack or panic attack, or if immediate help is needed, call 911 immediately.