



*Make Prevention a CHOICE*

## The Facts On Panic Disorder

### **HOW COMMON IS PANIC DISORDER?**

- Between 3 to 6 million Americans will have panic disorder in their lifetimes.
- Between 1 and 3 million people currently have panic disorder.
- Women are twice as likely as men to develop panic disorder.
- Panic disorder typically strikes in young adulthood, with median age of onset occurring at 24 years.

### **PANIC DISORDER:**

Panic disorder is one of the most treatable of all mental illnesses. Yet, it probably is the mental illness most apt to be unrecognized, incorrectly diagnosed and inappropriately treated. People with panic disorder experience unexpected and repeated episodes of intense fear accompanied by a set of unexplained physical symptoms, such as chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, or abdominal distress. Before getting the help they need, many panic disorder sufferers visit as many as 10 physicians and undergo extensive, costly and unnecessary medical procedures.

### **DURING A PANIC ATTACK, SOME OR ALL OF THE FOLLOWING SYMPTOMS OCCUR:**

Terror (a sense that something unimaginably horrible is about to happen and one is powerless to prevent it)—Racing or pounding heartbeat—Chest pains—Dizziness, lightheadedness, nausea—Difficulty breathing—Tingling or numbness in the hands—Flushes or chills—Sense of unreality—Fear of losing control, going “crazy”, or doing something embarrassing—Fear of dying

### **WHAT CAN HAPPEN TO SOMEONE WITH PANIC DISORDER?**

- People with panic disorder often fear that they are dying or losing control.
- 1/3 of people with panic disorders start to avoid situations where they fear an attack might occur.
- About 50% of people with panic disorder will have an episode of clinical depression in their lifetime.
- People who have panic disorder often turn to alcohol and drugs in an attempt to alleviate their mental and physical symptoms.
- People with panic disorder may experience problems with family, work, and social interactions.
- 20% of people with panic disorder attempt suicide at some time in their lives.

### **TREATMENT:**

Before beginning any treatment for panic disorder, a person should undergo a thorough medical examination to rule out other possible causes of the distressing symptoms. There are a number of other conditions which can cause symptoms resembling those of panic disorder. Effective treatments for panic disorder include, **medications and cognitive-behavioral therapy**. Appropriate treatment by a professional **reduces or prevents panic attacks in 70-90% of people**. With proper treatment, most people show **significant progress in a**

**couple of months.** Although relapses do occur in many people, they can be treated effectively. People seeking treatment for panic disorder can get medication therapy from a psychiatrist or primary care physician, and cognitive-behavioral therapy from mental health professionals who are trained in this treatment method.

### **COULD YOU HAVE PANIC DISORDER?**

1) Do you experience sudden episodes of intense and overwhelming fear that seems to come on for no apparent reason? Yes No

2) During these episodes, do you also experience several of the following symptoms? Yes No

Racing, pounding, or skipping heartbeat

Chest pain, pressure, or discomfort

Difficulty catching your breath

Choking sensation or lump in your throat

Excessive sweating

Lightheadedness or dizziness

Nausea or stomach problems

Tingling or numbness in parts of your body

Chills or hot flashes

Shaking or trembling

Feelings of unreality, or being detached from your body

3) During these episodes, do you have the urge to flee, or the feeling that you need to escape? Yes No

4) During these episodes, do you think something terrible might happen—that you might die, have a heart attack, suffocate, lose control, or embarrass yourself? Yes No

5) Do you worry a lot about these episodes or fear that they will happen again? Yes No

6) Does this fear cause you to avoid places or situations that you think might have triggered the attack? Yes No

**If you answered YES to most of these questions, chances are you are suffering from panic disorder. If so, you are not alone and there are effective treatments.**

If you think you or someone you know might have panic disorder, you can call 1-800-64-PANIC for more information on Panic Disorder. You may also call your local community mental health center or primary care physician.

## **How to Contact Us**

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