

Mental Health & Wellbeing at the Bar

Panic attacks



Wellbeing
at the Bar

Panic attacks

'I felt like I couldn't breathe, I just wanted to get out, to go somewhere else, but I couldn't because I was on a train'.

What is a panic attack?

Panic attacks are a type of fear response. They're an exaggeration of your body's normal response to danger, stress or excitement.

- [What do panic attacks feel like?](#)
- [When might I have panic attacks?](#)
- [What helps to manage panic attacks?](#)
- [What is panic disorder?](#)

What do panic attacks feel like?

I can't sleep due to panic attacks and nightmares. When I fall asleep within an hour I am up, soaked, heart racing and shaking.

During a panic attack, physical symptoms can build up very quickly. These can include:

- a pounding or racing heartbeat
- feeling faint, dizzy or light-headed
- feeling very hot or very cold
- sweating, trembling or shaking
- nausea (feeling sick)
- pain in your chest or abdomen
- struggling to breathe or feeling like you're choking
- feeling like your legs are shaky or are turning to jelly
- feeling disconnected from your mind, body or surroundings (these are types of dissociation – see our pages on [dissociative disorders](#) for more information).

During a panic attack you might feel very afraid that you're:

- losing control
- going to faint
- having a heart attack
- going to die.

'My teeth would chatter uncontrollably and my whole body [would] tremble, I'd hyperventilate and cry with panic as the feeling that I was going to fall unconscious was so convincing'.

You might find that you become scared of going out alone or to public places because you're worried about having another panic attack. If this fear becomes very intense, it may be called agoraphobia

[See <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/agoraphobia/Pages/Introduction.aspx>].

Dealing with Panic Attacks

CBT is the treatment of choice for a prolonged panic disorder: <http://cogbtherapy.com/cbt-for-panic-attacks/>

See also our resources on techniques to manage [performance anxiety](#).

Where can I find out more?

- <https://www.nhs.uk/Conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/Pages/coping-with-panic-attacks.aspx>
- <http://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/panic-attacks/>
 - <https://www.mind.org.uk/information-support/types-of-mental-health-problems/anxiety-and-panic-attacks/panic-attacks/#.Weh1Af6WzIU>
- <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/stress/stress-relief-in-the-moment.htm>
- <https://hbr.org/2014/11/how-to-handle-stress-in-the-moment>