



# PANIC DISORDER

## *Sutton*

### What is Panic Disorder?

Panic attacks are extremely frightening: a sudden rush of overwhelming fear (see symptom box). At least one in 10 people experiences occasional panic attacks. People who experience recurrent panic attacks may have Panic Disorder, which approximately one in 50 people will experience.

The experience of a panic attack can be so severe and sudden that people often think that they are having a heart attack or choking. Although frightening, panic attacks are not life threatening. For some people panic attacks are very unpredictable. Other people may associate their panic attacks with being in certain situations. This may develop into a phobia: a fear of a specific thing or place (e.g. agoraphobia).

As panic attacks are so intense and unpleasant, people who experience them may feel anxious about when the next panic attack will occur, often described as a "fear of fear". Some people also make changes to their life to avoid the chance of having a panic attack, for example not going to public places. People who have frequent panic attacks can often feel helpless and out of control leading to feelings of depression.

### What are the treatments for Panic Disorder?

Treatment for panic disorder can involve a variety of different approaches, including psychological therapy, medication and self-help.

There are some life-style changes that may help, including learning relaxation techniques, regular exercise and a reduction in stimulants such as caffeine and nicotine - your GP may be able to advise you, or you can find out more information on some of the websites/ books listed overleaf.

If the panic attacks persist your GP may refer you to the Psychological Therapies in Primary Care service (PTiPC) in Sutton. This service provides guided self-help, group therapy and some individual Cognitive Behaviour Therapy (CBT). You can find out more information about psychological therapies in the websites and books listed overleaf. Your GP may prescribe medication that can assist in managing anxiety.

If the anxiety and panic attacks persist after being seen by PTiPC and receiving a course of medication you may be referred to the Community Mental Health Team (CMHT). The CMHT provides specialist mental health services and will provide a care package which may include medication management, psychological therapy and social support. The CMHT may refer you to other services within the Trust that specialise in particular therapies.

### Symptoms of Panic Attacks

Most panic attacks last between 5 and 20 minutes. You may experience some of the following symptoms:

#### Physical symptoms

- Dizziness or feeling faint
- Heart racing (palpitations)
- Trembling or shaking
- Difficulty breathing
- Feeling of choking
- Feeling sick (nausea)
- Chest pain
- Numbness or tingling sensations
- Ringing in the ear.
- Chills or hot flushes
- Sweating

#### Psychological symptoms (thoughts and feelings)

- Feelings of unreality and detachment (derealisation / depersonalisation)
  - Fear of losing control
  - Fear of dying
  - Feeling an urge to escape
  - Feeling like you have lost control
- You may feel anxious about when the next panic attack might be.

If you change your patterns of going out to avoid the chance of a panic attack you may start to feel isolated and depressed

*A diagnosis should only be made a mental health professional.*



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### Useful sources of information and support

There is a lot of information about mental health available on the Internet and in books. Occasionally these are not from reliable sources and may provide mis-information. While service users and mental health professionals have recommended these websites, books and services, we cannot guarantee their quality nor can we take responsibility for the impact that the resources and services will have on you. The websites and books listed here are not an exhaustive list.

### Websites

- [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthproblems/anxietyphobias/anxietyphobias.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/mentalhealthproblems/anxietyphobias/anxietyphobias.aspx)
- [www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets/How+to/How+to+cope+with+panic+attacks.htm#What\\_are\\_panic\\_attacks\\_](http://www.mind.org.uk/Information/Booklets/How+to/How+to+cope+with+panic+attacks.htm#What_are_panic_attacks_)
- [www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=277&sectionId=28419](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk/articles/article.aspx?articleId=277&sectionId=28419)
- [www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23069094/](http://www.patient.co.uk/showdoc/23069094/)
- [www.nopanic.org.uk](http://www.nopanic.org.uk)
- [www.phobics-society.org.uk/](http://www.phobics-society.org.uk/)
- [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/therapies/cognitivebehaviouraltherapy.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/mentalhealthinformation/therapies/cognitivebehaviouraltherapy.aspx)

### Books

- The Anxiety and Phobia Workbook by Bourne, E. J. (3<sup>rd</sup> Ed) ISBN: 1572244135.
- Overcoming Panic by Derrick Silove ISBN: 1854877011
- Feel the Fear and Do It Anyway: How to Turn Your Fear and Indecision into Confidence and Action by S. Jeffers ISBN: 091907071
- Mind Over Mood: Cognitive Treatment Therapy Manual for Clients by Padesky, C., & Greenberger, D Guilford Press. ISBN: 0898621283
- Cognitive Therapy of Anxiety Disorders: A Practical Guide by A. Wells ISBN: 047196476X

**Local non-NHS services** Your GP will also be able to advise you of local services and how to contact them.

#### No Panic (Sutton)

A self-help discussion group held weekly or fortnightly for people who suffer from an anxiety disorder. Provides support and information. Please call the number below before attending the group.

**Telephone** 020 8644 0363

#### Private Therapy

If you are interested in seeking private therapy it is recommended that you find a therapist through one of these professional bodies:

**British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies** [www.babcp.com](http://www.babcp.com)

**British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy**  
[www.bacp.co.uk/seeking\\_therapist/index.html](http://www.bacp.co.uk/seeking_therapist/index.html)

**British Psychological Society**  
[www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/psychoindex.cfm](http://www.bps.org.uk/e-services/find-a-psychologist/psychoindex.cfm)

#### Other Useful Numbers

**National Phobic Society Helpline:** 0870 122 2325 (Monday - Friday 9.15-9pm)

**First Steps to Freedom Helpline:** 08451202916 (everyday 10am to 2am)

**SaneLine:** 0845 767 8000 (Monday- Sunday 1-11pm)

**Samaritans:** 08457 90 90 90 (everyday, 24 hours)

**NHS Direct:** 0845 46467 (every day, 24 hours)

**Mental Health Helpline:** 0500 639 000

There are other voluntary services in Sutton that may be useful but not directly linked to OCD, please ask your GP for more information.