

These are times of immense anxiety and/or stress, with or without triggers which can occur again and again.

### **What to look for**

If you have four or more of the following, you are having a panic attack:

- restlessness
- shortness of breath
- palpitations.
- sweating.
- shaking.
- a feeling of choking.
- chest pain or discomfort.
- nausea.
- dizziness or faintness.
- a fear of going crazy.
- a fear of dying.
- numbness or tingling.
- chills or hot flushes.
- insomnia

If you have recurrent panic attacks, you fear having more attacks or change your behaviour because of such attacks, you may have panic disorder.

Unfortunately there are no definite causes of this. If you have had a panic attack you may live in fear on having another one, and this causes you more anxiety.

Many people with panic disorder relate an attack to what they were doing when it occurred. However the cause of the panic attack may not be that simple.

### **Causes**

The underlying cause of panic disorder is not clear. There is evidence of a genetic, phobic and a biochemical basis.

Panic disorder may begin after a serious illness or accident, the death of a close friend, separation from the family, or the birth of a baby. Attacks may also accompany the use of certain illegal drugs. Most often, however, a panic attack comes "out of the blue"; it may even begin during sleep.

### **Traditional Treatment**

Treatment must be based on each individual case as the cause of panic attacks is not clear.

Psychotherapy offers support and helps to minimise the fearfulness of symptoms of the disorder. This is often enough to control the disorder, however if more attacks result, the patient may require additional measures.

### **Dietary Considerations**

Magnesium has a tranquillising action. Speak with your doctor about taking this mineral. Avoid caffeine and other stimulants, alcohol, and sugar.

### **Prevention**

You can take steps to lessen the chance of attacks and learn to manage them better.

- Learn to recognize a panic attack. And use self-talk to walk yourself through it. Speak nicely to yourself.
- Try not to be so critical of yourself and remember that you will improve and that it does take time.

### **When to seek further professional advice**

- you think you have panic disorder.