

YOUR CLINIC NAME
PATIENT EDUCATION HANDOUT

PANIC ATTACKS

Understanding Panic Attacks

What is a panic attack?

A panic attack is a sudden episode of intense fear or discomfort. It can happen even when there is no obvious danger. The physical sensations can feel frightening and overwhelming.

What might someone experience?

- A racing or pounding heart
- Shortness of breath or trouble breathing normally
- Chest discomfort
- Sweating or trembling
- Dizziness or light-headedness
- Nausea or stomach discomfort
- A feeling of losing control
- Fear that something terrible is about to happen

Not everyone experiences every symptom.

Why can it feel so frightening?

The physical sensations themselves can trigger more fear. A person may interpret these changes as a sign that something dangerous is happening, which can intensify the experience.

What should you do?

Seek medical assessment for new, unfamiliar or concerning symptoms. If you have previously been evaluated for panic attacks, your doctor can advise you about appropriate management strategies.

Seek urgent medical help for new or severe chest pain, severe trouble breathing, fainting, or other sudden serious symptoms. Do not assume these are caused only by panic.

When should you speak to a clinician?

If episodes recur, cause significant distress, affect daily activities, or lead you to avoid certain places or situations, speak with a qualified clinician or mental-health professional.

This handout is for general education only and is not a substitute for individualized medical advice.