



## The Facts About Panic Disorder

- Panic Disorder affects 2.6 million American adults and women are twice as likely to be affected than men.
- Panic Disorder is rare in young children. The most common age of onset varies from late adolescence to mid-thirties. Panic Disorder is often mentioned as a top reason for women dropping out of college.
- Panic Disorder is diagnosed when an individual suffers severe and unexpected panic attacks, which may make them feel like they are having a heart attack or losing control for no apparent reason. These attacks vary from person to person and are followed by at least one month of concern over having another attack. While some may experience repeated attacks for weeks, others will have short bursts of severe attacks. Often panic attacks are situationally predisposed leading some individuals to change their behavioral patterns. About one third of people with Panic Disorder also suffer from agoraphobia, in which the person's world narrows and he/she avoids situations and places.
- A Panic attack is defined as the abrupt onset of an episode of intense fear or discomfort, which peaks in approximately 10 minutes, and includes at least four of the following symptoms:
  - Feelings of imminent danger or the need to escape
  - Palpitations
  - Sweating
  - Trembling
  - Shortness of breath or a feeling of choking
  - Chest pain
  - Nausea or abdominal discomfort
  - Dizziness or lightheadedness
  - Depersonalization; A sense of things being unreal
  - Fear of losing control or "going crazy"
  - Fear of dying
  - Tingling sensations
  - Chills or hot flashes
- Panic Disorder commonly occurs along with agoraphobia, which is fear of having a panic attack in a place from which escape is difficult. Many sufferers develop a fixed route or territory as a safety zone without suffering severe anxiety. In extreme cases, people are unable to leave their homes. Depression may coincide with Panic Disorder.