

Symptoms, Signs, and Triggers of Anxiety Attacks

An anxiety attack is a short period of overwhelming fear that comes on with no warning and for no rational reason. An anxiety attack can be a one-time event, but most often is an ongoing problem. Those who experience regular anxiety attacks (two or more anxiety attacks a month) should go to a doctor. It's very likely that those who experience that many anxiety attacks have an anxiety or panic disorder. An anxiety attack is also often called a panic attack.

Regular anxiety attacks can prevent the person who experiences them from living a normal, happy life. Anyone of any adult age, from both genders, and of all races and economic backgrounds can have an anxiety attack.

Doctors and caregivers don't know for sure what brings on an anxiety attack. But studies have shown that there are some health conditions and medications that might cause an anxiety attack. Anxiety attack triggers include withdrawing from alcohol or illegal drugs, a fear of having another anxiety attack, or heredity reasons.

An anxiety attack can bring on feelings of loneliness and a feeling of being out-of-touch with other people. There are other physical and emotional symptoms associated with an anxiety attack, but the main symptom is extreme fear. Some of the physical symptoms that can show up with an anxiety attack can feel like the symptoms of a serious health problem, like a heart attack.

The physical and emotional signs and symptoms of an anxiety attack rarely last longer than 30 minutes. The most intense symptoms of an anxiety attack usually peak within ten minutes. There have been a few rare cases where symptoms of an anxiety attack have lasted for hours.

Even though the physical and emotional signs and symptoms of an anxiety attack might last only minutes, the psychological symptoms can last much longer.

Those who experience anxiety attacks never know when an anxiety attack will hit them. A person might have an anxiety attack once a week. Or a person might have a series of anxiety attacks followed by months and months of no anxiety attacks.

This uncertainty coupled with the actual physical and emotional symptoms of an anxiety attack makes life very challenging for those who have anxiety attacks. Some people become so fearful of an anxiety attack coming at an inappropriate moment that they are afraid to leave their homes. This fear is often called agoraphobia.

The literal definition of agoraphobia is a fear of open spaces. This definition is often misleading and confusing, especially when used in reference to anxiety attacks. People experience anxiety attacks in all situations and statistically very few experience anxiety attacks in open spaces.

Agoraphobia often begins when a person experiences an anxiety attack in a specific situation. Even after a diagnosis is made and treatment begins, the person often convinces him or herself that the situation that caused an out-of-the-blue anxiety attack will cause numerous future anxiety attacks. So, naturally, the person avoids that situation.

Anxiety attack causing agoraphobia is two times more common in women than men. Well-known American celebrities who have admitted to experiencing agoraphobia related panic attacks include Kim Basinger and Barbara Streisand.

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About the Author

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