

# Stopping Panic Attacks: Here's How

Panic attacks can strike anyone like a bolt from the blue. They're more common in those of us who live with an anxiety disorder or depression. Even short panic attacks can be exhausting and terrifying, but they can be controlled and stopped by everyone with the same steps.

## What is a panic attack and how do I stop it?

A [panic attack](#) is a sudden and overwhelming episode of fear accompanied by intense physical reactions. A panic attack is not typically triggered by any consistent threat. They begin without warning and are debilitating. A panic attack can happen anywhere. You might be driving your car or in bed. You could be in a movie theatre or at home. Panic attacks don't require a particular context to wreck your day.

Panic attacks typically begin suddenly, without warning. They can strike at any time — when you're driving a car, at the mall, sound asleep or in the middle of a business meeting. You may have occasional panic attacks, or they may occur frequently.

The hallmark of a panic attack is the overwhelming sense of danger or a feeling of impending death that overrides rationality. [Signs and symptoms](#) include the following:

- Fear of loss of control or death
- Sense of impending doom or danger
- Rapid, pounding heart rate
- Sweats
- Shakes, all over body shakes or trembling
- Feeling a thickness or tightness in the throat
- Chills or hot flashes
- Chest pain (panic attacks are often mistaken for heart attacks)
- Numbness or tingling sensation
- Nausea
- Cramping
- Headache
- Dizziness, lightheadedness or faintness
- Feeling of unreality or detachment from one's self.

## Stopping a Panic Attack

Controlling your breathing is the first, most crucial step to [stopping a panic attack](#). Panic attacks engage the fight-or-flight response, ramping it from 0 to 100 in seconds. As there's no real threat in your environment, your body won't de-escalate the survival response on its own, because there are no cues to tell you the threat has passed. You have to take direct control by slowing your breathing and quickly stop a panic attack. To that end:

1. *Take slow, deep breaths.* Use your stomach muscles to contract your diaphragm. To make sure you're using your diaphragm, place your hand on your upper abdomen. Let your hand lie there with no pressure and allow it to rise up and fall down as you breath. Inhale

for 5 seconds, pause for 1 or 2 seconds, then exhale for 5 seconds. Do not hold your breath for more than a few seconds.

2. *Ground yourself in your surroundings by using your senses.* Look around. What do you see? Where are you? What can you hear? Do you smell anything? What can you touch? A panic attack usually leads to racing thoughts. By switching your focus from your internal state of fear to that of an observer, you can de-escalate a panic attack.
3. *Reassure yourself that you are safe.* Use self-talk to comfort yourself. Remind yourself that this is a panic attack. It's ok to be scared but you are safe, you're in no danger and you're going to be just fine.
4. Keep up that deep breathing until your heart rate returns to a normal beat.

### What are Anxiety Attacks?

Anxiety attacks are somewhat similar to panic attacks, except anxiety attacks lack the fear of imminent death and the fear of a loss of control. They also don't involve a sense of unreality or depersonalization. Unlike a panic attack, anxiety attacks can last off and on for days.

If you want to beat panic attacks and you're concerned about the many side effects of antidepressants, consider NeuroSpa TMS in Tampa, Florida. NeuroSpa TMS offers treatment for depression via Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation (TMS), an FDA cleared non-invasive treatment for mental health disorders. NeuroSpa TMS uses targeted magnetic pulses to stimulate areas of the brain that affect mood, which helps you get back to your best life quickly and with no side effects. Among the many anxiety and depression treatment options out there, TMS therapy is an excellent, pain-free solution that is covered by most insurance. Learn more at <https://www.neurospatms.com/>

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