

Facts about addiction and panic disorders

People with alcohol and other drug dependencies often suffer from co-occurring mental health illnesses.

Mental health and recovery

Individuals with untreated mental health issues may experience more difficulty in recovery.

For some people alcohol and drug use and withdrawal can cause symptoms of anxiety. In these cases the anxiety symptoms may be substance related and the symptoms will subside with prolonged abstinence. For others the symptoms of anxiety persist and may even worsen with prolonged abstinence thus making recovery more difficult. For these individuals, treatment options are available.

What is a panic disorder?

A panic disorder is characterized by unexpected and repeated experiences of intense fear accompanied by physical symptoms that may include chest pain, heart palpitations, shortness of breath, dizziness, or abdominal distress.

Many people with panic disorder have a lot of anxiety between episodes (often called panic attacks). As the frequency of panic attacks increases, the person often begins to avoid situations where they fear another attack may occur or where help may not be immediately available.

Panic attacks can occur any time, even during sleep. An attack usually lasts about ten minutes, but some symptoms may last much longer.¹

How common is panic disorder?

About 1.7% of the adult United States population ages 18 to 54 (approximately 2.4 million) have panic disorder. Women are twice as likely as men to develop panic disorder. Panic disorder typically begins in young adulthood.²

What causes panic disorder?

The exact causes of panic disorders are unknown and are the subject of intense scientific investigation. Hereditary and other biological factors, stressful life events, and thinking in a way that exaggerates relatively normal bodily reactions are all believed to play a role in the onset of panic disorder.²

What treatments are available for panic disorder?

Panic disorders are one of the most treatable anxiety disorders. Treatment for panic disorder includes medication and cognitive behavioral therapy, which teaches people how to view panic attacks differently and demonstrates ways to reduce anxiety. It is important to discuss medication options with a professional that has knowledge about substance abuse and dependency, because some medications may be addictive.³

About Mental Health Services

Mental health services at Hazelden are part of the internationally recognized Hazelden Foundation. Hazelden, a national nonprofit organization founded in 1949, helps people reclaim their lives from the disease of addiction. Built on decades of knowledge and experience, Hazelden's comprehensive approach to addiction addresses the full range of patient, family, and professional needs, including treatment and continuing care for youth and adults, research, higher learning, public education and advocacy, and publishing.

For more information about mental health services at Hazelden, please call 800-257-7800.

References

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