

The anxiety attack, the panic attack



➔ What it is...

A **panic attack / anxiety attack** often occurs without warning. It begins suddenly, is short-lived, and peaks quickly (usually in under 10 minutes).

Someone experiencing a panic attack feels in danger and wants nothing more than to escape from wherever they are.

A **panic attack is characterised by a combination of feelings and thoughts, which can take the following forms:**

- Palpitations, or an accelerated heart rate
- Perspiration
- Trembling or twitching
- A feeling of breathlessness or suffocation
- Chest pain or discomfort
- Nausea or stomach pain
- Feelings of dizziness, loss of balance, light-headedness or a fainting sensation
- Numbness or pins and needles
- Shivering or hot flushes
- Feelings of unreality or detachment from oneself
- **Fear** of losing control of oneself
- **Fear** of going mad
- **Fear** of dying

➔ How to overcome...

To overcome a panic attack, it is necessary to learn the following basic steps:

- **Relax:** the aim is to help the person to understand their symptoms and increase their ability to produce pleasant and beneficial feelings.
- **Get breathing under control:** the person must learn how to break the vicious circle of physical sensations that feed anxiety and fear.
- **Spot the early-warning signs:** the person must learn how to initiate a calming process as soon as the first signs of alarm and fear appear.
- **Manage thoughts:** the person must learn how to identify thoughts that provoke needless anxiety, adjust them to reality, and use them to help impede the process of a panic attack.
- **Face up to panic-inducing situations:** the person must gradually learn how to face up to daunting situations and regain control.

If you need help putting these various steps into practice or wish to discuss them, contact the CERN Medical Service psychologist.

Christiane Reis, psychologist

Consultations by appointment on Tuesdays & Thursdays

➔ To make an appointment:

- tel. : 76619 (Tuesday & Thursday)
- mail : psychologist-me@cern.ch or Christiane.Reis@cern.ch
- tel. Medical Service Secretariat: 78435 / 73186

+ info on medical Service website:
<https://medical-service.web.cern.ch>



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