

Panic Disorder

Kyle is driving down Route 1 South on the way to his aunt's house. After 10 minutes of driving, his face starts to flush and his heart starts racing. He feels out of control and paralyzed by fear. He is overwhelmed by chest pain and dizziness and tries to pull over from the left lane but can't due to heavy traffic. These feelings last for several minutes. Although he does eventually make it to his aunt's house, Kyle never drives on Route 1 again and worries greatly about when and if another episode will occur.

Someone with **panic disorder** may have an experience like the one above.

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, "people with panic disorder have sudden and repeated attacks of fear that last for several minutes. Sometimes symptoms may last longer. These are called panic attacks. Panic attacks are characterized by a fear of disaster or of losing control even when there is no real danger. A person may also have a strong physical reaction during a panic attack. It may feel like having a heart attack. Panic attacks can occur at any time, and many people with panic disorder worry about and dread the possibility of having another attack."¹

According to the National Institute of Mental Health, **signs and symptoms** of panic disorder can include:

- Sudden and repeated attacks of fear
- A feeling of being out of control during a panic attack
- An intense worry about when the next attack will happen
- A fear or avoidance of places where panic attacks have occurred in the past
- Physical symptoms during an attack, such as a pounding or racing heart, sweating, breathing problems, weakness or dizziness, feeling hot or a cold chill, tingly or numb hands, chest pain, or stomach pain¹

Bibliography

¹ The National Institute of Mental Health, "Panic Disorder." Accessed July 25, 2013.
<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/panic-disorder/index.shtml>.