

Phobias and Panic Attacks

This fact sheet will give some information about phobias and panic attacks and how to find help through local statutory agencies, in addition to national organizations.

What are phobias?

We all experience fear and anxiety in our daily lives, as a useful emotion to keep us alert and avoid danger. A phobia is a common form of anxiety expressed as an intense fear of a situation or an object, which becomes excessive or irrational. It then impacts on a person's life and inhibits their participation and enjoyment of daily activities. There are many different types of phobias, such as fear of spiders, birds, closed or open spaces, heights, or fear of social situations. Some specific phobias can be readily avoided such as fear of flying, while others, fear of going outside for example, have detrimental effects on work, shopping and relationships.

Where do phobias come from?

A phobia can often be linked to a significant event, and the fear lingers on long after the event, so for example a fear of going outdoors may be related to an earlier attack or mugging, and the realistic fear and anxiety have become generalised to all outdoor situations. In cases of long-term reaction to a serious threat or traumatic event this is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. Sometimes phobias arise as a secondary factor in someone's mental ill health. For example, some people with depression withdraw from friends and family. When the time comes to go shopping or socialising, it can be very frightening, so is avoided if at all possible.

What can I do about it?

Your GP can refer you to a local psychology service or other organisations which may be able to assist. However, often people with phobias develop their own coping strategies to deal with it, perhaps by avoidance, so it can be very difficult to change an avoidance behaviour possibly used for years. It therefore follows that it is much

better to seek help early, before the adaptive restricting strategy becomes entrenched.

Different forms of psychological help can be very effective and work fast - cognitive behavioural therapy can remove a moderate phobia, such as fear of the Underground, within a few sessions. If you feel the phobia is linked to a severe traumatic event you may want to explore the origins of the fear in more depth through counselling.

What are Panic Attacks?

A panic attack occurs when you experience an extreme sense of fear, often abruptly, without warning. This is part of the body's normal defence 'fight or flight' system. You may tremble, become short of breath, feel palpitations, become dizzy or faint. You may feel you are having a heart attack or could stop breathing. You may not be able to link it to a known fear or concern, but it may be associated with a phobia, or other anxiety.

What can I do about it?

Like phobias, it will help to visit your GP if you experience these regularly. You may be referred to a psychologist to learn breathing and relaxation techniques or other cognitive behavioural techniques. Your first step is to recognise that you have the power to control your symptoms. You will then be able to utilise the techniques in the event of future panic attacks. Your GP may also prescribe medication. The organisations listed below could also help you with ways to control your symptoms.

Local Statutory Services

Harrow Talking Therapies Service

If you are over the age of 18, are experiencing low to moderate anxiety or depression and are under the care of a GP in Harrow, you can be referred to the Harrow Talking Therapies Service, previously known as Harrow Improving Access to Psychological Therapies (IAPT) service. This service is able to provide Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), short term counselling, online therapy, Behavioural Couples Counselling and workshops on a variety of different topics. 2 People seeking help with difficulties other than depression or anxiety, or whose difficulties require more specialist or intensive treatment which cannot be provided in a primary care setting, can be directed to the appropriate specialist or secondary care mental health services. The easiest way to access this service is to refer yourself using the online referral form or to call the service on 020 8515 5015. The online referral form can be found at: www.cnwtalkingtherapies.org.uk/refer-yourself. If you are unable to self-refer, you can request your GP to refer you to this service.

After you have completed the online referral form, you will be contacted for an assessment within a few weeks. Please note that there is a waiting list to access therapy from the Harrow Talking Therapies Service which is currently at a minimum 8 weeks but will vary depending on demand and the service required.

Harrow Talking Therapies Service

12-14 Station Road, Harrow, HA1 2SL

Tel: 020 8515 5015 / 5016 | Email: harrow.iapt@nhs.net

Web: www.cnwtalkingtherapies.org.uk/h1-harrow-2

Clinical Health Psychology Department

Mental Health unit (centre). Northwick Park Hospital, Fernley and Eastlake Ward Watford Road, Harrow HA1 3UJ.

Tel: 020 88692313

This service can provide psychological therapy via referral from GPs, psychiatrist and Community Mental Health Team. There is often a long waiting list for sessions.

National Organisations

Anxiety UK

Nunes House, 447 Chester Road, Manchester, M16 9HA

Tel: 03444 775 774 (Helpline) Monday – Friday 09:30-5:30pm

Text support: 07537 416905

Email: support@anxietyuk.org.uk | helpline@anxietyuk.org.uk

Web: www.anxietyuk.org.uk

Anxiety UK is a voluntary organisation that provides support for those experiencing anxiety. They offer helpline and email support and information available on their website.

No Panic

No Panic, 51a Market Street, Oakengates, Telford, Shropshire, TF2 6EL

Helpline: 0300 7729844 (10:00am to 10:00pm) | Crisis Line: 01952 680 835

Youth Helpline: 0300 7729844 (for 13 to 20 year olds, 3pm-6pm) (Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 3pm to 8pm Thursday and Saturday)

Email: sarah@nopanic.org.uk | Web: www.nopanic.org.uk

No Panic offers support, advice, information via their website and recovery programme to for phobias, OCD and other anxiety based disorders.

Triumph over Phobia

PO Box 3760, Bath, BA2 3WY

Tel: 01225 571740 | Tel: 07907 344669 |

Email: info@topuk.org | Web: www.topuk.org

Triumph over Phobia is a voluntary organisation that supports sufferers of phobias, OCD and other related anxiety disorders. They run a network of self-help groups facilitated by trained volunteers.

British Association for Behavioural and Cognitive Psychotherapies (BABCP)

Minerva House, Hornby Street, Bury, Lancashire BL9 5BN

Tel: 0330 320 0851 | Email: babcp@babcp.com | Web: www.babcp.org.uk

A professional association operating a highly respected voluntary register for accredited Cognitive Behavioural Therapists (CBT psychotherapists).

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP).

15 St John's Business Park, Lutterworth, Leicestershire LE17 4HB, U.K

Tel. 01455 883 300 | Email: bacp@bacp.co.uk | Web: www.bacp.co.uk

BACP is the association for Counselling professionals in the UK.

Websites

Royal College of Psychiatrists Leaflet

<http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/anxiety,panicandphobias.a>
[SDX](#)

Information on the diagnosis, symptoms and treatments of anxiety, panic and phobias.

Support & Wellbeing Information Service Harrow (SWiSH)

SWiSH is for anyone in Harrow aged 18 years and over – those looking for help for themselves as well as carers and staff in local organisations. It can offer information or advice about a wide range of local services, including where to keep fit and well, manage finances, join social groups, look for work, start a course, access help with housing or

welfare benefits or apply for a personal budget. You can call the SWiSH helpline on 020 8426 0929, Mon-Fri, 9.30am-5pm.



This factsheet was produced by Mind in Harrow

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