

Asthma and Panic Attacks – knowing the difference

The start of an asthma attack and a panic attack can be very similar and it can be hard to know the difference. Both involve feeling anxious! It makes sense that asthma can increase symptoms of anxiety, and anxiety can increase symptoms of asthma. Knowing the difference and how to manage anxiety is extremely helpful.

Here are some ways to tell the difference between an asthma attack and a panic attack.

Asthma Attack	Panic Attack
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shortness of breath • Wheezing • Coughing • Chest tightness • Labored breathing • Difficulty speaking • Unable to move freely • Difficultly eating and drinking • Can last for several hours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Extreme anxiety about the situation • Shortness of breath • Chest pain • Light headed • Tingling & numbness of the arms and legs • Feeling like you are going to have a heart attack • Sweating or overheating • Lasts 5-10 minutes

The more you learn about what anxiety is, what it feels like and how long it can last, the better. Put yourself in a situation that you know makes you feel a little bit anxious (but would not trigger an asthma attack) and just notice how your body feels and the difference between that and an asthma attack.

There are lots of good resources and books to help you understand more about anxiety and how to manage it. Talking about your feelings, such as anxiety, also helps. It can be a good idea to talk to someone you trust- that could be a friend, teacher, guidance teacher, parent, doctor, counselor or psychologist. You should not carry anxiety around like a heavy rucksack- the more you share the lighter your rucksack or 'worry' will be.

Here are some helpful resources to help you learn how to manage anxiety.

- <http://kidshealth.org/en/parents/anxiety-disorders.html?WT.ac=ctg#catfeelings>
- http://www.moodcafe.co.uk/media/19579/cyp_parents_1_2_web.pdf
- <https://www.anxietybc.com>
- The Huge Bag of Worries, by Virginia Ironside