

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

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

There are lots of good resources and books to help you and your child understand more about anxiety and how to manage it. Talking about their feelings, such as anxiety, also helps. Older children may find it useful to talk to someone else they trust- that could be a friend, teacher, guidance teacher, doctor, counselor or psychologist. Children should not carry anxiety around like a heavy rucksack- the more they share the lighter their rucksack or 'worry' will be.

Here are some helpful resources to help you and them 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](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