

Asthma vs. Panic: How to Tell the Difference



Around 10% of people with asthma also have panic disorder. Asthma and panic have similar symptoms: shortness of breath, chest tightness, feelings of intense fear.

Why is it important to know the difference?

It can be confusing, but knowing what your asthma and panic triggers are, and how to treat each type of attack, can make you feel better!

These episodes can be scary but you can gain control over your asthma and panic!

Asthma Symptoms

- Shortness of Breath
- Wheezing
- Chest Tightness/Pain
- Mucus Production
- Coughing
- Loss of Energy

Panic Symptoms

- Shortness of Breath
- Pounding Heart
- Chest Pain
- Sweating
- Shaking/Trembling
- Dizziness or Lightheadedness
- Nausea/Upset Stomach
- Feelings of Unreality
- Fear of Losing Control or Dying

Is it Asthma or Panic?

Coughing, wheezing or mucus production does not normally happen during panic attacks but often occur during an asthma attack.

Is it asthma or panic?

- Make a list of your symptoms.
- Use your **Peak Flow Meter!**

Peak flow below 80% of personal best likely asthma.

What to do:

Asthma

VS.

Panic

- 1 Follow your asthma action plan and consider using your quick-relief/rescue asthma medication.
- 2 Monitor your asthma symptoms.
- 3 If coughing/wheezing/shortness of breath does not get better after your quick-relief/rescue medication, contact your healthcare provider.
- 4 If you have difficulty breathing, have trouble walking, talking, lips/nails turn blue/gray, or if your chest pulls in every time you breathe, **CALL 911.**

- 1 Do not take quick-relief/rescue asthma medication.
- 2 List your symptoms.
- 3 Remind yourself that these symptoms are harmless, even if uncomfortable.
- 4 Remind yourself that hyperventilation can be controlled by slow, shallow breathing.
- 5 Contact your healthcare provider for treatment for panic.