

It's good to talk

I have been suffering with panic attacks for 5 years now, and have been unable to go out the house on my own for the last 3 years. I can manage to walk up the street to my family's house but no further than that. I have two young children and I would love to take them to places such as the park but I can't. Every time I have a panic attack I almost pass out and my heart races and I go dizzy and sometimes it feels like I am going to die. I am only 21 years old, and it's affecting my whole life.

I have been to the doctors and have currently got an appointment to see a Cognitive Behavioral Therapist, but that has taken 9 weeks. When I go for my appointment, he has got to assess whether I am eligible for the treatment or not, and if I am, it's another waiting list I have got to go on. Please can you suggest something?

Arora says: it would seem that you are suffering very much with your panic attacks and they are controlling your life, and sometimes it may feel like you are going crazy. Your symptoms are classic of Panic Disorder. One out of every 75 people might experience panic attacks, usually appearing in early adulthood. There are many reasons why people have panic attacks, such as genetics, if family members have suffered in the past with other emotional disorders, stressful situations in life can trigger panic attacks, sometimes both physical and psychological work together to cause panic attacks.

In the meantime, you can do other things to assist yourself. I teach my client's relaxation techniques and creative visualisation using hypnotherapy, which in turn gives you the tools to have more control of the attacks.

At the end of the day panic attacks can be treated and you can live your life to the full.

Dear Anna,

I am a fit and active 43 year old man. I have played various sports and enjoyed a variety of outdoor activities since school days, without any serious or reoccurring problems – until recently! I have noticed over the last month or two that I have been avoiding using my right arm for casual activities (like lifting the kettle and closing the tap, for example) – I am right handed. It is painful in the point of my shoulder.

More recently the mild pain in my shoulder has started to become much, much worse. It has been waking me up in the night and I can't seem to get rid of it.

I did get a massage, which helped a bit, but I am now getting desperate, as I can hardly move my arm in any direction without serious pain that radiates across the top of my shoulder and down to my elbow. Will chiropractic help more than a massage?
Yours DB

Dear DB

I am sorry to hear that you are experiencing such pain. Without a complete examination it is obviously inappropriate to attempt to diagnose your condition. However, the detailed description you provide in your letter does suggest a condition called Adhesive Capsulitis, commonly referred to as "Frozen Shoulder".

This condition can strike anyone, at any time; sometimes gradually, as with yourself, and sometimes quite suddenly.

The give-away symptom is very restricted movement, as you describe. I see people walk into my clinic holding their arm awkwardly, bent at the elbow, across their stomach. If asked to lift their arm straight up to the side they are very reluctant! Ask them, or help them, to move their shoulder joint and the pain is often excruciating!

Massage may help with the muscle tightness that accompanies the condition, but to regain full movement of the shoulder, (without the pain) will normally take several sessions of careful joint manipulation which your local chiropractor can provide. It is not an overnight cure, as the "unfreezing" is a gradual process – but ironically, an icepack applied for 15 minutes once an hour can help with the pain. This condition is a tricky one, but can be helped with time and patience. Good luck!

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