

PANIC AND ANXIETY ATTACKS, AND POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

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Panic disorders are very common, and most respond extremely well to nutritional balancing programs. They all occur when an alarm reaction at the level of the mind triggers a fight-or-flight reaction in the body. This, in turn, worsens the anxiety or panic feelings in the mind, and a vicious cycle is set up. Unless the cycle is broken, the cycle builds upon itself within seconds or maybe a minute until a full-blown panic episode occurs. The person may feel extremely anxious or afraid, sweaty, with a fast pulse, alterations in respiration and perhaps other symptoms.

PANIC ATTACKS AND THE STRESS RESPONSE

Another feature of all panic disorders is they are all fight-or-flight reactions that occurs from within with no obvious life-threatening situation as the cause. The proper functioning of the sympathetic nervous system is that, in response to danger or even a threat of danger, the body shifts into a fight-or-flight reaction to prepare it to run or fight. The symptoms are identical to a panic episode such as a faster heart rate, and a heightened state of the irritability of the nervous system.

However, in the case of panic or anxiety attacks or PTSD, the system is hypersensitive, and goes into this type of reaction inappropriately, when no real danger is present. The danger is either imagined or recalled in a memory only, and/or it is due to biochemical imbalances that make the nervous system unusually hypersensitive or unstable or hyper-irritable.

BIOCHEMICAL FACTORS IN ALL PANIC DISORDERS

Copper imbalance. Most panic conditions involve copper toxicity. Copper enhances biogenic amine production and tends to enhance all emotional reactions. It appears to stimulate the old brain, also called the emotional brain or diencephalon. This tends to accentuate or provoke panic episodes.

Low or bioavailable calcium and magnesium. This is often another contributing factor. Calcium and magnesium, in a bioavailable form, are needed to stabilize and relax the nervous system. Our food supply today often does not provide enough of it, since pasteurized dairy products are not as good a source as they once were.

Low zinc. This is often involved as well. Zinc is a calming nutrient, a copper antagonist, and needed for many reactions in the brain and elsewhere in the body. When low, one is prone to copper excess, moodiness and emotional instability. Zinc is depleted by stress, so many soldiers, for example, easily become depleted of zinc. However, today the entire population is somewhat low in zinc.

Fast or very slow oxidation. A balanced oxidation rate assists the autonomic or automatic nervous system to function correctly. When the oxidation rate is unbalanced, either too fast or too slow, the

autonomic system does not respond correctly to stressors of many kinds. This can give rise to panic episodes.

Deficiency of omega-3 fatty acids. The omega-3 fatty acids are deficient in most people today due to feeding livestock on grains instead of grasses. Also, vegetable oils high in the competing omega-6 fatty acids are widely used, which unbalances the ratio of the fatty acids in most people. In some cases, inadequate omega-3 fatty acids can make the nervous system hyper-irritable and even unstable.

Toxic metals. The presence of excessive mercury, cadmium, lead or other toxic metals is another factor that is commonly present in cases of panic episodes. All decrease the stability of the nervous system and interfere with its functioning in other ways as well.

REASONS FOR AN EXCELLENT RESPONSE.

As the causes above for panic episodes are removed, the attacks diminish – usually within a few days or even sooner. **In fact, panic attacks are one of the fastest conditions to respond to nutritional balancing programs.** Post traumatic stress disorder should also respond well, though we have less experience with it than with other types of panic attacks.

I believe the response is so fast and complete because nutritional balancing can halt the attacks in several ways. One is to balance the oxidation rate, which makes the nervous system respond in a more appropriate manner to all stressors. Another is supply badly needed nutrients that also short-circuit or stop the attacks. These include calcium, magnesium and zinc, the “sedative” minerals.

Finally, nutritional balancing also can often uncover and remove the deeper causes of the problem. This is usually a copper imbalance, and perhaps excessive amounts of other toxic metals, toxic chemicals or other substances or deficiencies that must be corrected to restore proper functioning of the autonomic nervous system. This will stop inappropriate fight-or-flight reactions.

TRIGGERS AND DEEPER CAUSES

I find it helpful to distinguish between getting rid of triggers for panic attacks, and correcting deeper causes. Doing both is the best approach. Triggers might include a low blood sugar level, fatigue, hunger, thirst, or potentially any other physical or chemical imbalance that acts as a stressor upon the body or mind. By improving one’s diet, lifestyle and living habits, these can be minimized. This alone will prevent many panic attacks, but not all. Also, the threat of a panic attack would still hang over a person and this is one of the most frightening aspects of the condition.

Correcting underlying biochemical imbalances and restoring the autonomic nervous system takes longer, but is an important part of all nutritional balancing programs and can help to do away with panic attacks for good. This means that even if one is caught without proper food or water, or is tired, the nervous system will not react with a panic episode. This is always our goal, and it is quite achievable in our experience. We have helped many people with panic and anxiety attacks, usually easily and quickly.