

If panic is treated in parents, also children feel better

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Children of parents with anxiety disorders are more likely to develop anxiety disorders than children of normal controls. This familial aggregation is due to genetic and environmental influences, whereas it can be assumed that shared environmental influences have the greatest effects during childhood, decreasing with age.

The aim of this naturalistic prospective longitudinal study was to get first evidence of whether successful [cognitive behavioral therapy](#) (CBT) of parental panic disorder (PD) has a positive long-term impact on children's psychopathology. Participants were patients with a diagnosis of PD (with/without agoraphobia) with a child aged between 8 and 18 years. Forty-three [parents](#) (38 women, mean age before treatment 39.6 years, SD 4.66) were included in the study. Their children's (n = 54, 31 girls) mean age was 12.0 years (SD 2.58, range 8–18). Parents and their children were assessed for symptoms of psychopathology before and after treatment with structured interviews.

Of the 43 participating parents, 35 received panic treatment, while 8 chose not to undergo panic treatment until the follow-up (FU) assessment. After a mean of 6 years after completing the initial interview (minimum 4 years, maximum 10 years, SD 0.9), all patients were invited to participate in the FU evaluation. At FU assessment, 96.7% of the 29 parents who received treatment were free of a diagnosis of PD. In contrast, 66.7% of the 6 parents who declined treatment still fulfilled the criteria for PD at FU. Analyses revealed that the level of parental treatment success was a significant predictor of children anxiety

sensitivity and the Asthma Control Questionnaire scale 'physical threat'. Furthermore, for parents who participated versus parents who did not participate in treatment, receiving psychotherapy treatment (regardless of whether it was successful or not) was a significant predictor of depression (Beck Depression Inventory) of the offspring. Our results indicate that parental treatment success was a significant predictor of a better outcome for children's anxiety sensitivity and agoraphobic cognitions 6 years after parents had completed treatment. Furthermore, participation in treatment, regardless of the success of the treatment, had a significant positive effect on offspring. Thus, parental treatment seems to benefit not only the patients themselves, but also their [children](#).

More information: Schneider S. et al. Panic Treatment Reduces Children's Long-Term Psychopathology: A Prospective Longitudinal Study. *Psychother Psychosom* 2013;82:346-348 ([DOI: 10.1159/000350448](#))

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