



# Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

UHN

## What is PTSD?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is an anxiety disorder that can start after a person experiences or witnesses a stressful event that could have caused serious injury. The person believes that he or she or someone else is in serious danger.

Some examples of a stressful event include:

- Acts of nature (such as a fire, flood or hurricane)
- War
- Assault (such as rape or violence in the home)
- Child Abuse
- Accidents (such as a car accident or workplace accident)
- Acts of Terrorism (such as bombings or torture)

## What are the Signs and Symptoms?

- “Flashbacks” (vivid memories of the event happening over and over)
  - These memories can happen any time
  - The person usually feels the same fear they felt when the event first happened
- Nightmares
- Avoiding people, places or things related to the stressful event
- Difficulty falling asleep
- Anger
- Hypervigilance (feeling keyed-up or jittery)

These symptoms last more than 6 months and cause many problems in different areas of the person’s life such as in their work, relationships and social activities.

Symptoms can be triggered by sights, smells or sounds that cause the person to re-live the event such as loud noises, car accidents or a news report.

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## What are the treatments?

PTSD responds well to treatment. There are many types of treatments that can be used such as:

- Psychotherapy – this includes counseling, education and support
- Medication
- Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
- Exposure Therapy
- Group Therapy

\* You should speak to your doctor to find out which treatment is best for you. It is important you choose a therapist with special training in PTSD to help you with this problem.

If a person does not get help for PTSD it can lead to other problems such as:

- Depression
- Anxiety
- Alcohol or drug use
- Health problems

If you would like more information on PTSD you can:

- Speak to your healthcare worker
- Call the PTSD Info-Line at 1-800-FYI-CALL (1-800-296-6300)
- Search the PTSD website at [www.ptsdinfo.org](http://www.ptsdinfo.org)
- E-mail the National Center for PTSD at **ncptsd@va.gov**