

# Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)



## Information for patients and families

Read this information to learn:

- What Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is
- The signs and symptoms
- How it is treated
- Where you can find more information



## **What is PTSD?**

Post traumatic stress disorder is an anxiety disorder. It can start after a person experiences or sees a stressful event that could have caused serious injury. This disorder causes the person to believe that they or someone else is in serious danger.

Some examples of a stressful event include:

- a fire, flood, hurricane or other natural disaster
- war
- a rape or other violent assault
- child abuse
- accidents (such as a car accident or workplace accident)
- bombings, torture or other acts of terrorism

## **What are the signs and symptoms of PTSD?**

- Flashbacks

These are clear 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 very tense or jittery)

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

Sights, smells or sounds like a news report, loud noise or smell of smoke can trigger symptoms of PTSD. This can cause the person to relive the stressful event.

## **What are the treatments?**

PTSD responds well to treatment. There are many types of treatments that can help, including:

### **Psychotherapy**

- During psychotherapy, you talk to a psychiatrist or psychologist about your moods, feelings and behavior. They can provide counseling, education and support to help you cope.

### **Medicines**

- Some medicines can help reduce the symptoms of PTSD.

### **Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT)**

- CBT can help you change how you think and what to do in certain situations. These changes can help you cope with the symptoms.

### **Exposure therapy**

- This kind of therapy helps a person gradually face their fear in a safe place.

### **Group therapy**

- A therapist meets with a group of people who have PTSD. They share their experiences and learn ways to cope with the symptoms.

**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

## Where can I find more information about PTSD?

Speak to your health care worker.

Find more information at the [National Centre for PTSD](#).

- Website: <https://www.ptsd.va.gov>
- Email: [ncptsd@va.gov](mailto:ncptsd@va.gov)



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