

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a condition that can develop after people experience or witness events where they felt they had no control and feared for their lives or the lives of others. People may have an overwhelming feeling of anxiety during or after the traumatic event. Traumatic events might include: a serious accident (car wreck), a physical or sexual assault, a natural disaster (earthquake), seeing someone killed, or experiencing military combat.

Symptoms

Symptoms can cause great distress and interfere with relationships, work, and other activities. They vary for everyone, but might include:

- Feeling on guard, watchful or jumpy
- Feeling irritable or angry
- Trouble thinking clearly
- Having trouble sleeping
- Having disturbing memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
- Trouble feeling close or loving to family and friends
- Avoiding people, places, or things that remind you of the event

Facts about PTSD

- It is a medical illness, and like other medical illnesses, it is treatable.
- It is one of the most common mental health issues in the United States.
- It is not a sign of weakness and should not be blamed on the person experiencing it.

Risk Factors

It is not fully understood why some people develop PTSD and others do not. Some risk factors include:

- Length of time exposed to traumatic event
- Serious injury due to the traumatic event
- Being directly exposed as a victim or a witness
- Traumatic event occurring in childhood
- History of trauma
- History of depression, anxiety and/or addiction
- Recent stressful life change like the death of a loved one, divorce, job loss or physical illness

Treating PTSD

Early treatment may help keep the PTSD from becoming more severe or chronic. Treatment can also help to manage symptoms, decrease the risk of suicide, and improve relationships at home, work, and community. Treatment options include:

Medications

- Help to decrease some symptoms, like anxiety, depression, or insomnia.
- Might include Antidepressants, Prazosin, second generation antipsychotics, and/or mood stabilizers

Psychotherapy

- Often paired with medications.
- Help process trauma, develop coping skills and restructure thinking.
- Options include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), Prolonged Exposure Therapy (PE), Cognitive Processing Therapy (CPT) or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

Groups

- Provide safe environment to share feelings, receive support, and learn new coping skills