



## 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
- Trouble sleeping
- Experiencing disturbing memories, nightmares, or flashbacks
- Trouble feeling close to family or friends
- Avoiding reminders (people, places, things) 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:

- Serious injury due to the traumatic event
- Length of time exposed to the event
- Direct exposure as a victim or witness to the event
- The event occurred 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:** Some SSRIs and SNRIs; other medications may be prescribed to treat symptoms such as insomnia or anxiety
- **Psychotherapy (specialty settings):** Prolonged Exposure Therapy, Cognitive Processing Therapy, or Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing
- **Brief evidence-based behavioral interventions (primary care settings):** Psychoeducation, Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), CBT for Insomnia, or Behavioral Activation for PTSD
- **Groups** provide safe environment to share feelings, receive support, and learn new coping skills

