



## **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that some people get after seeing or living through a dangerous event. When in danger, it's natural to feel afraid. This fear triggers many split-second changes in the body to prepare to defend against the danger or to avoid it. This "fight-or-flight" response is a healthy reaction meant to protect a person from harm. But in PTSD, this reaction is changed or damaged. People who have PTSD may feel stressed or frightened even when they're no longer in danger.

### **Symptoms**

PTSD can cause many symptoms. These symptoms can be grouped into three categories:

#### **1. Re-experiencing symptoms:**

- Flashbacks—reliving the trauma over and over, including physical symptoms like a racing heart or sweating
- Bad dreams
- Frightening thoughts.

Re-experiencing symptoms may cause problems in a person's everyday routine. They can start from the person's own thoughts and feelings. Words, objects, or situations that are reminders of the event can also trigger re-experiencing.

#### **2. Avoidance symptoms:**

- Staying away from places, events, or objects that are reminders of the experience
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Feeling strong guilt, depression, or worry
- Losing interest in activities that were enjoyable in the past
- Having trouble remembering the dangerous event.

Things that remind a person of the traumatic event can trigger avoidance symptoms. These symptoms may cause a person to change his or her personal routine. For example, after a bad car accident, a person who usually drives may avoid driving or riding in a car.

#### **3. Hyperarousal symptoms:**

- Being easily startled
- Feeling tense or “on edge”
- Having difficulty sleeping, and/or having angry outbursts.

Hyperarousal symptoms are usually constant, instead of being triggered by things that remind one of the traumatic event. They can make the person feel stressed and angry. These symptoms may make it hard to do daily tasks, such as sleeping, eating, or concentrating.

It’s natural to have some of these symptoms after a dangerous event. Sometimes people have very serious symptoms that go away after a few weeks. This is called acute stress disorder, or ASD. When the symptoms last more than a few weeks and become an ongoing problem, they might be PTSD. Some people with PTSD don’t show any symptoms for weeks or months.

### Treatments

The main treatments for people with PTSD are psychotherapy (“talk” therapy), medications, or both. Everyone is different, so a treatment that works for one person may not work for another. It is important for anyone with PTSD to be treated by a mental health care provider who is experienced with PTSD. Some people with PTSD need to try different treatments to find what works for their symptoms.

If someone with PTSD is going through an ongoing trauma, such as being in an abusive relationship, both of the problems need to be treated. Other ongoing problems can include panic disorder, depression, substance abuse, and feeling suicidal.

Source: National Institute of Mental Health

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

### **Military**

<http://www.ptsd.va.gov/>

**U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs: National Center for PTSD**

Information Line: 802-296-6300

<http://www.military.com/benefits/content/veterans-health-care/posttraumatic-stress-disorder-overview.html>

**Military.com: Post-traumatic Stress Disorder Overview**

### **General**

<https://s3.amazonaws.com/reeve-assets-production/Womens-Mental-Health-After-Paralysis-Booklet-Final-Master-4-8-2020.pdf>

**Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation: Women's Mental Health After Paralysis**

A free 44-page booklet on various topics related to women's mental health after SCI and paralysis, it includes a section on PTSD. Please call 1-800-539-7309 for a free print copy.

[http://www.psychguides.com/ptsd\\_patient](http://www.psychguides.com/ptsd_patient)

**Expert Consensus Guidelines: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder – A Guide for Patients and Families**

<http://kidshealth.org/parent/emotions/feelings/ptsd.html>

**KidsHealth: Posttraumatic Stress Disorder**

Written for children.

<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/posttraumaticstressdisorder.html>

**Medline Plus: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

<http://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/go/ptsd>

**Mental Health America: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

<http://www.metanoia.org/suicide/ptsd.htm>

**Metanoia: Why is it so hard for us to recover from being suicidal?**

This article discusses PTSD among chronically suicidal people.

<http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

**National Institute of Mental Health: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)**

<http://www.naric.com/?q=en/rif/Who%20Is%20Most%20Likely%20to%20Develop%20Post-Traumatic%20Stress%20Disorder%20After%20Spinal%20Cord%20Injury%3F>

**NARIC: Who is Most Likely to Develop PTSD?**

[www.pva.org](http://www.pva.org)

**Paralyzed Veterans of America** has a clinical practice guideline for health care workers titled **Management of Mental Health Disorders, Substance Use Disorders, and Suicide in Adults with Spinal Cord Injury**.

The information covers PTSD.

<https://www.webmd.com/mental-health/post-traumatic-stress-disorder#1>

**WebMD: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder**

### Online Support Groups and Discussion Forums

<http://ptsd.supportgroups.com/>

**PTSD Support Groups**

<http://www.dailystrength.org/c/Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder/support-group>  
**DailyStrength: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) Support Group**

<https://www.myptsd.com/>  
**My PTSD: PTSD & CPTSD Global Peer Support Community**

<http://www.patientslikeme.com/conditions/24-post-traumatic-stress-disorder>  
**Patients Like Me: PTSD Community** gives a snapshot of the disorder  
[www.patientslikeme.com](http://www.patientslikeme.com)  
Enter PTSD in search box to find other people with PTSD.

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