



BALANCED LIVING

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Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

WHAT IS PTSD?

You may have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) if you've been through a traumatic event and are having trouble dealing with it. Such events may include a car crash, rape, domestic violence, military combat, or violent crime. While it is normal to have some anxiety after such an event, it often goes away in time. But with PTSD, the anxiety is more intense and keeps coming back. And the trauma is relived through nightmares, intrusive memories, and flashbacks. These can be vivid memories that seem real. The symptoms of PTSD can cause problems with relationships and make it hard to cope with daily life. But it can be treated. With help, you can feel better.



WHO IS AT RISK FOR PTSD?

There are many risk factors for having PTSD. Recognizing and addressing them can help prevent PTSD, when possible. These risk factors include:

Causes:

PTSD may be triggered by something that:

- Happened to you
- Happened to someone close to you
- You saw

Examples include:

- Serious accidents, such as car or train wrecks
- Natural disasters, such as floods or earthquakes
- Manmade tragedies, such as bombings, a plane crash, a shooting
- Violent personal attacks, such as a mugging, rape, torture, being held captive, or kidnapping
- Military combat
- Abuse in childhood or adulthood

- Lack of family or social support resources
- Repeated exposure to traumatic circumstances
- Personal history of trauma or a stress or anxiety disorder
- Family history of mental health disorders
- Personality traits of vulnerability and a lack of resilience
- History of childhood trauma
- Personality disorder or traits including borderline personality disorder, paranoia, dependency, or antisocial tendencies



HOW IS PTSD DIAGNOSED?

Not every person who goes through trauma gets PTSD or has symptoms at all. PTSD is diagnosed if your symptoms last more than 1 month. Symptoms often begin within 3 months of the trauma. But they can also start months or years later.

How long this illness lasts varies. Some people recover within 6 months. Others have symptoms that last much longer.

HOW IS PTSD TREATED?

Treatment will depend on your symptoms, age, and general health. It will also depend on how severe the condition is.

You may think that asking for help is a sign of weakness. In fact, taking action to make your life better takes a lot of courage. Talking about a trauma can be hard. But it can make a big difference. The main treatment for PTSD is counseling. You'll work with a trained therapist to learn new ways to cope with your experiences. Medicine may also be prescribed to help with anxiety, depression, or sleep. Most people with PTSD have a combination of counseling and medicine for treatment.

TYPES OF COUNSELING

Counseling is done in a safe environment, 1-on-1, or in a group. Group therapy is often done with people who've been through similar events. PTSD is often treated with one or more of the

Symptoms:

Symptoms of PTSD last more than a month. They may include:

- Unwanted or intense memories of a trauma
- Nightmares
- Vivid memories or flashbacks that make you feel like you're reliving the event
- Feeling worried, fearful, anxious, or suspicious
- Strong reactions when you're reminded of the trauma (or sometimes for no obvious reason at all)
- Intrusive thoughts about combat, death, or killing
- Feeling disconnected or isolated, as if you're not yourself
- Loss of interest in things you once enjoyed
- Feeling agitated, tense, on edge, or easily startled
- Bursts of anger or irritation
- Problems focusing
- Trouble falling or staying asleep

The symptoms of PTSD may look like other mental health conditions. Always see your healthcare provider for a diagnosis.

following forms of counseling. Talk with your healthcare provider so you can decide what format that works for you.

- **Cognitive processing therapy (CPT)** helps you cope with negative thoughts linked to trauma. You'll work with a therapist to understand how you think and feel about what happened. You'll learn skills to help you cope with the trauma. CPT won't make you forget about what happened, but it can make the memories easier to live with.
- **Prolonged exposure therapy** helps you deal with thoughts and situations related to the trauma in new ways. You'll learn breathing and relaxation methods to calm yourself when you experience triggers. With your therapist's help, you may go into situations that remind you of the trauma. You'll learn to reduce your reactions over time. This can help with avoidance. You'll also talk about the trauma to help you gain control over how you think and feel about it.
- **Other therapies.** Other therapies for PTSD include coping skills training, acceptance and commitment training, eye movement desensitization and reprocessing (EMDR), family counseling, and PTSD psychoeducation.

TIPS TO GET THE MOST FROM A VISIT TO YOUR HEALTHCARE PROVIDER:

- Before your visit, consider your goals and write down questions you want answered.
- Bring someone with you to help you ask questions and remember what your healthcare provider tells you.
- Write down the name of a new diagnosis, new medicines, treatments, tests, and any instructions.
- Know why a new medicine or treatment is prescribed, how it will help you, and what the side effects are.
- Ask if your condition can be treated in other ways.
- Know why a test or procedure is recommended and what the results could mean.
- Know what to expect if you do not take the medicine or have the test or procedure.
- If you have a follow-up appointment, write down the date, time, and purpose for that visit.
- Know how you can contact your healthcare provider if you have questions.

Key Points On PTSD:

- Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition in which a person has experienced a traumatic event that causes long-term stress.
- PTSD may be triggered by a traumatic event that happened to the person or someone close to them. Or it may be something that the person saw.
- PTSD can occur in children and adults.
- The person may have flashbacks, stay away from stressful situations, or withdraw emotionally.
- Diagnosis is made by a healthcare provider when the symptoms last longer than 1 month.
- Treatment involves medicine and therapy to decrease the emotional effects of the disorder and increase coping skills.

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This Month's Webinar

PTSD: LET'S GET THE FACTS

You've heard about it. What is it, what are its causes, and how is it treated? This webinar will explore and discuss post-traumatic stress disorder. We will discuss the definition, common myths vs. facts, symptoms, relationships, self-care, and treatment.

[Log-in](#) any time this month to watch the webinar and ask the expert questions!