

10 Things Everyone Should Know About

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

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Living through a frightening or disturbing experience can cause people to develop a condition called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). In fact in any given year, more than 5 million people in the U.S. suffer from PTSD. This condition can be very difficult, but treatment can help.

1. PTSD is a medical condition.

- ✓ It can develop after a person experiences or witnesses a traumatic event.
- ✓ Some things that may lead to PTSD include violent crime like rape or assault, military combat, accidents, and natural disasters.
- ✓ Anyone can develop PTSD. Men, women and children of all ages can be affected.

2. Recognize the symptoms of PTSD.

- ✓ People with PTSD may have recurring nightmares or thoughts about the trauma. These may be so vivid that it feels like they are reliving the event.
- ✓ They may have sudden outbursts of anger or feelings of mistrust or guilt.
- ✓ PTSD can cause depression, anxiety and problems sleeping. People with PTSD may be unable to feel their emotions at all.

3. PTSD may cause physical symptoms.

- ✓ People with PTSD may get headaches, have stomach problems or feel dizzy.
- ✓ They may have chest pain, discomfort in other areas of the body, or immune system problems.
- ✓ If you are having any of these symptoms following a traumatic event, ask your health care provider if PTSD could be the reason.



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4. PTSD often starts within 3 months of the event.

- ✓ But for some people, symptoms do not begin until years later.

5. Previous trauma can increase a person's risk.

- ✓ Studies show that people who have been through a traumatic event before, either recently or as a child, are at a higher risk for PTSD.

6. PTSD can be treated.

- ✓ Talking with a doctor or counselor who is familiar with PTSD helps many people to recover.
- ✓ Medication may ease symptoms like fear, anxiety or depression.
- ✓ Joining a support group with others who have PTSD can also help.



7. Recovery takes time.

- ✓ With treatment, some people are able to recover within six months. For others it can take longer.
- ✓ Treatment helps most people.

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8. Positive actions can help the healing process.

- ✓ Learn and use relaxation techniques.
- ✓ Avoid alcohol and illegal drugs.
- ✓ Eat a healthy diet and get plenty of rest and exercise.

9. Friends and family members can help.

- ✓ Learn about PTSD.
- ✓ Join a support group for friends and family.
- ✓ Be patient and supportive.

10. For more information:

- ✓ Talk with your health care provider or contact your local mental health services.
- ✓ Visit these websites:
 - National Center for PTSD www.ptsd.va.gov
 - VA Mental Health www.mentalhealth.va.gov
 - National Alliance on Mental Illness www.nami.org
 - Make the Connection www.maketheconnection.net
- ✓ If you are in crisis or afraid you may hurt yourself, call **1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)**.

For more information on VA benefits and services, visit the VA website at www.va.gov, the VA caregiver website at www.caregiver.va.gov or call **1-800-827-1000** for VA Benefits Administration or **1-855-260-3274** for the National Caregiver Support Line.

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This pamphlet is not a substitute for medical care.
If you have questions or concerns, please talk with
a health care provider.