



Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder or condition that develops after someone has experienced or witnessed a life-threatening or traumatic event; such as combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents or physical or sexual assault.^{1,2} This event involved actual/perceived death or serious injury and caused an intense emotional reaction of fear, hopelessness, or horror.^{1,2} PTSD usually begins immediately after the traumatic event, but it can start later, even years later.²

Most survivors of a traumatic event will return to normal with time, however others will not and may get worse – these people may develop PTSD.² PTSD is more common in “at-risk” groups such as service members, who may be exposed to traumatic events performing their military responsibilities.²

Because people are unique, individual reactions to PTSD vary.² For instance, people may develop some PTSD symptoms but may not be diagnosed with PTSD.¹ Most service members do not develop PTSD or have a diagnosis of PTSD, but some do experience PTSD symptoms.¹

In order to be diagnosed with PTSD, a person has to experience symptoms from all three recognized symptom categories.¹ These categories are re-experiencing the event over and over again; avoiding people, places and feelings that bring back memories of the event; and feelings of edginess all the time.¹ These symptoms stay with them and interfere with their ability to live normally or do their jobs.^{1,2} PTSD cases often resolve on their own within the first three months or most symptoms improve over the first year.^{1,2}

With more severe PTSD cases, people will experience ups and downs with periods of symptom increase and then periods of remission or decrease.² Therefore in the most severe cases PTSD (chronic form of PTSD), people will experience symptoms that are long lasting and severe that can last a lifetime.²

Treatments and Recovery

PTSD can be treated. Therapy has been effective in reducing and even eliminating the symptoms.¹ PTSD may be treated with talk therapy with a mental health professional and medications, such as antidepressants.^{1,2} There are also other treatments that are showing promise, especially cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT).³

The earlier treatment begins, the better the outcome can be.¹ If someone has symptoms (even without the full diagnosis), counseling or therapy may help.¹

Prevalence:²

- An estimated 6.8% of Americans will experience PTSD during their lives
- Women are more than two and a half times as likely as men to develop PTSD
- About 3.6% of U.S. adults (5.2 million people) have PTSD during a given year
- About 8% of men and 20% of women develop PTSD after a trauma
- Roughly 30% of these individuals develop a chronic form throughout their lifetime
- About 30% of the service members who served in Vietnam experience PTSD
- Estimates of PTSD from the Gulf War are as high as 10%
- Estimates from the war in Afghanistan are between 6% and 11%
- Current estimates of PTSD in military personnel who served in Iraq range from 12% to 20%

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References:

1. "Force Health Protection & Readiness Quick TBI and PTSD Facts." Force Health Protection and Readiness. 15 Oct. 2008 <http://fhp.osd.mil/image/outreach/quick_white.pdf>.
- 2.) Hamblen, PhD, Jessica. "What is PTSD?" National Center for PTSD. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 15 Oct. 2008
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/handouts/handout_What%20is%20PTSD.pdf>
- 3.) Hamblen, PhD, Jessica. "Treatment of PTSD?" National Center for PTSD. U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. 15 Oct. 2008.
<http://www.ncptsd.va.gov/ncmain/ncdocs/handouts/handout_TreatmentforPTSD.pdf>

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