What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)?

“PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a traumatic event. A traumatic event is a life-threatening event such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault in adult or childhood” (1)

Who can get PTSD?

❖ Anyone who was a victim, witness or has been exposed to a life-threatening situation.
❖ Survivors of physical and sexual assault, abuse, care accidents, disaster, terror attacks, or other serious events.
❖ Combat veterans or civilians exposed to war.
❖ Some experiences, like the sudden or unexpected death of a loved one
❖ Emergency responders who help victims during traumatic events.
❖ Children who are neglected and/or abused (physically, sexually, or verbally).

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

Symptoms usually begin within 3 months of the traumatic incident, but sometimes they begin later. For symptoms to be considered PTSD, they must last more than a month and be severe enough to interfere with functioning in relationships or work.

❖ Repeatedly thinking about the trauma
❖ Being constantly alert or on guard
❖ Avoiding reminders of the trauma
❖ Depression or/and Panic attacks
❖ Physical symptoms such as chronic pain, headaches, stomach pain, diarrhea, tightness or burning in the chest, etc
❖ Feelings of mistrust
❖ Problems in daily living
❖ Substance abuse
❖ Relationship problems

Factors that may reduce the risk of PTSD

❖ Seeking out support from friends and family
❖ Support group after traumatic event
❖ Coping skills
❖ Learning to feel good about one’s own actions in the face of danger
❖ Being able to act and respond effectively despite feeling fear
How is PTSD treated?

❖ Psychotherapy
  o **Exposure therapy.** This therapy helps people face and control their fear.
  o **Cognitive restructuring.** This therapy helps people make sense of the bad memories.

❖ Medications
  o Antidepressants such as selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) control PTSD symptoms such as sadness, worry, anger, and feeling numb inside

❖ Support Groups

❖ Self-Care

How can I help some who had PTSD?

❖ Offer emotional support and encouragement.
❖ Learn about PTSD so that you can be more understanding.
❖ Listen carefully and pay attention to triggers.
❖ Encourage activities that will create positive distractions such as taking a walk.
❖ Never ignore comments about death or wanting to die. Contact the person’s therapist or doctor for help or call the **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline (1-800-273-8255)** or **911** in an emergency.

Sources


Resources

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
1-800-273-TALK (8255)
http://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org/

National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (NCPTSD)
Phone: (802) 296-5132
http://www.ptsd.va.gov/

Screening for Mental Health (For Military)
Phone: (781) 239-0071
www.militarymentalhealth.org

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)
Phone: (800)-789-2647
http://www.samhsa.gov/veterans-military-families