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Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is not a disorder to be associated solely with military personnel, as it has been in the past. It has been shown that exposure to traumas such as a serious accident, a natural disaster, or criminal assault can result in PTSD. When the aftermath of a traumatic experience interferes with normal functioning, the person may be suffering from PTSD. The increasing stress of living in the 21st century, on both a global and personal level, has been sufficient to considerably elevate the numbers of people who suffer from PTSD.

PTSD can occur at any age, from childhood to old age and traumatic stress can be cumulative over a lifetime. Responses to trauma include feelings of intense fear, helplessness, and/or horror. There are three types of generally recognized stressors:

- Threatened death or serious injury to one's person;
- Learning about the death, near death, or serious injury of a family member or close friend;
- Witnessing the death, near death or serious injury of another person

For Posttraumatic Stress Disorder to be diagnosed, symptoms must be present for more than one month and be accompanied by a drop-off in the ability to socialize, work, or participate in other areas of daily functioning. Symptoms of PTSD are:

- Reexperiencing the event, which can take the form of intrusive thoughts and recollections, or recurrent dreams;
- Avoidance behavior in which the sufferer avoids activities, situations, people, and/or conversations which he/she associates with the trauma;
- A general numbness and loss of interest in surroundings; this can also present as detachment;

Fast Facts About PTSD

- 5.2 million Americans ages 18-54 are diagnosed with PTSD.
- PTSD can develop after an individual experiences a traumatic event such as sexual or physical assault, witnessing a death, the unexpected death of a loved one, natural disaster or a terrorist attack.
- 67% of those exposed to mass violence have been shown to develop PTSD - a higher rate than those exposed to other types of traumatic events, such as natural disasters.
- One study shows that 8% of Manhattan residents living below 110th street (approximately 67,000 people) have probable PTSD related to 9/11.
- 2-4% of people across the country appear to have PTSD related to the 9/11 attacks.
- People who have experienced previous traumatic events run a higher risk of developing PTSD.
- Treatment of PTSD can

- Hypersensitivity, including: inability to sleep, anxious feelings, overactive startle response, hypervigilance, irritability and outbursts of anger.

include Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT), group therapy, exposure therapy, and medication.

PTSD can occur at any age, although it is less frequent in the elderly. Young children who have suffered a trauma may have dreams of the event, which within a few weeks, turn into general nightmares. Children will often relive the event through play. They may also exhibit physical symptoms, such as headaches and stomachaches. (See "[Children & Trauma](#)")

Symptoms usually begin within three months of a trauma, although there can be a delayed onset and six months can pass between trauma and the appearance of symptoms. In some cases years can pass before symptoms appear, in this case the symptoms are often triggered by the anniversary of the trauma, or with the experience of another traumatic event. Symptoms may vary in frequency and intensity over time.

[Take a PTSD Self-Test](#)
[Find a Treatment Provider](#)

Other Resources about PTSD

[PTSD Alliance](#)

[National Center for PTSD](#)

[National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

[International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies \(ISTSS\)](#)

[Expert Consensus Treatment Guidelines; Posttraumatic Stress Disorder](#)

[AboutOurKids.org - About PTSD](#)

[Gift From Within - PTSD Resources for Survivors and Caregivers](#)

[Now available from NIMH: The Mental Health and Mass Violence](#)

Anxiety Disorders Association of America
8730 Georgia Avenue, Suite 600
Silver Spring, MD 20910, USA
Main # (240) 485-1001
Fax # (240) 485-1035

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