



10 Things Everyone Should Know About Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder



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.



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.

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 Institute of Mental Health www.nimh.nih.gov
 - National Alliance on Mental Illness www.nami.org
 - Mental Health America www.mentalhealthamerica.net
- If you are in crisis or afraid you may hurt yourself, call 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255).

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

2009 Reviewed for accuracy. ©2007 Journeyworks Publishing, P.O. Box 8466, Santa Cruz, CA 95061
800-775-1998; www.journeyworks.com. All rights reserved.

Title #5509-PDF (Rev. 9/09) ISBN 978-1-56885-509-5