

# POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition triggered by one or more traumatic events, whether experienced directly or witnessed. Individuals affected by PTSD may experience intrusive thoughts about the traumatic incident, recurrent distress, flashbacks, and avoidance of situations reminiscent of the trauma. Most people who go through traumatic events may have temporary difficulty adjusting and coping, but with time and good self-care, they usually get better. If the symptoms get worse, last for months or even years, and interfere with your day-to-day functioning, you may have PTSD.

## SYMPTOMS

- **Reliving:** Involuntary vivid reliving of the event through flashbacks, hallucinations, distressing images or situations, physical sensations like pain, sweating, or trembling, and nightmares related to the traumatic event.
- **Avoidance:** Trying to avoid reminders of the trauma by avoiding people, places, things, or memories associated with the trauma, suppressing memories, or emotional numbing leading to isolation and withdrawal.
- **Excessive Arousal:** Feeling “on edge”, having intense anxiety or difficulty relaxing, increased alertness and awareness of threats, easily startled, irritability and angry outbursts, difficulty sleeping, and concentration issues.
- **Intrusive Negative Thoughts or Feelings:** Constant negative thoughts leading to shame, guilt, and emotional distress.
- **Children:** May exhibit delays in toilet training, motor skills, or language development.
- **Physical Symptoms:** Headaches, dizziness, chest pains, and stomach aches.

## CAUSES

- **Traumatic Events:** PTSD can develop after serious accidents, physical or sexual assault, or abuse (including childhood or domestic abuse).
- **Inherited Risks:** Genetic, psychological, physical, and social factors play a role. A family history of anxiety or depression may increase vulnerability.
- **Lack of Emotional Support:** A history of intense mental trauma, lack of emotional support from family and friends, and exposure to workplace abuse contribute to PTSD.
- **Body’s Response to Stress:** PTSD alters the body’s stress response, affecting hormones and neurotransmitters.

## COMPLICATIONS

- Affects normal functioning, social relationships, and work life.
- Associated with depression, drug/alcohol abuse, and eating disorders.
- In severe cases, suicidal tendencies may occur.

## PREVENTION

- Open communication with family and friends.
- **Healthy lifestyle:** Proper diet, rest, exercise, and stress management.
- Avoid alcohol, drugs, and caffeine.
- Engage in hobbies to reduce stress and anxiety.



For more information visit  
[pttc.edu/mental-health-and-wellness](http://pttc.edu/mental-health-and-wellness)



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## TREATMENT OPTIONS

- Medications: Antidepressants (e.g., sertraline, paroxetine )and insomnia medications (e.g., clonazepam )
- Therapy: Cognitive-behavioral therapy, exposure therapy, psychodynamic therapy, and EMDR.

## INTENSITY OF SYMPTOMS

PTSD symptoms can vary in intensity over time. You may have more PTSD symptoms when you're stressed in general, or when you come across reminders of what you went through. For example, you may hear a car backfire and relive combat experiences. Or you may see a report on the news about a sexual assault and feel overcome by memories of your own assault.

## WHEN TO SEE A DOCTOR

If you have disturbing thoughts and feelings about a traumatic event for more than a month, if they're severe, or if you feel you're having trouble getting your life back under control, talk to your doctor or a mental health professional. Getting treatment as soon as possible can help prevent PTSD symptoms from getting worse.



## IF YOU HAVE SUICIDAL THOUGHTS

If you or someone you know has suicidal thoughts, get help right away through one or more of these resources:

- Reach out to a close friend or loved one.
- Contact a minister, a spiritual leader or someone in your faith community.
- Contact a suicide hotline. In the U.S., call or text 988 to reach the [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#), available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Or use the Lifeline Chat. Services are free and confidential.
- Make an appointment with your doctor or a mental health professional. Or reach out through our EAP [www.healthadvocate.com](http://www.healthadvocate.com)



## WHEN TO GET EMERGENCY HELP

If you think you may hurt yourself or attempt suicide, call 911 or your local emergency number immediately. If you know someone who's in danger of attempting suicide or has made a suicide attempt, make sure someone stays with that person to keep him or her safe. Call 911 or your local emergency number immediately. Or, if you can do so safely, take the person to the nearest hospital emergency room.



If you see this 393 Peer Supporter hard hat sticker it means the individual has received training and is a safe person to confide in.