POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

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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 lifethreatening event such as military combat, natural disasters, terrorist incidents, serious accidents, or physical or sexual assault in adult or chilhood" (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 sometime 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
 - 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

- 1. National Center for PTSD, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs. What is posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)? https://www.ptsd.va.gov/understand/what/ptsd_basics.asp
- 2. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/publications/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml
- 3. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. https://www.mentalhealthamerica.net/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder

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/veteransmilitary-families