

PTSD facts and resources

What is PTSD?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) occurs in people who have experienced or witnessed a traumatic event. Events can include car accidents, plane crashes, fires, natural disasters, war or combat, violent crimes, death or the serious injury/illness of a loved one. The event can occur in a single instance or can be the result of sustained or repeated exposure over time. Reactions to such events can vary by individual, and symptoms may appear soon after the event or after some time has passed.

Symptoms of PTSD

Reaction to trauma may vary but typical symptoms include:

- Nightmares
- Reliving the event
- Unpleasant, uncontrollable thoughts
- Feelings of sadness, guilt or worry
- Irritability
- Problems falling or staying asleep
- Avoiding reminders of the event
- Feeling alone or isolated
- Angry outbursts
- Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself
- Feeling of wanting to hurt others

Children may show additional or different symptoms:

- Withdrawal-type symptoms
- Not talking
- Refusing to go places
- Refusing to play with friends
- Acting younger than their age
- Stomachaches or headaches

Although such symptoms may seem unhealthy, they are reasonable responses to having experienced a traumatic event.

Getting help

PTSD is more common than most people realize, and treatment is readily available. A good starting point is your primary physician. Your doctor may prescribe medications that help minimize the physical aspects of PTSD. He or she may refer you to another resource, such as a mental health professional, who can guide you through resolving your feelings.

Getting help quickly will help get your symptoms under control and get your life back on track sooner.

See a doctor immediately if:

- Symptoms persist for more than one month
- You have a significant impairment in everyday functioning
- You feel like your life is spinning out of control
- You are having thoughts of self-harm or assault