

WHAT IS PTSD?

Individuals may develop **posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)** after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening or emotionally intense event. Any stressful situation, including divorce, combat exposure, or natural disasters, can cause PTSD.

Traumatic events may cause **stress-related reactions** in most individuals, and these reactions usually diminish with time. When **they don't subside** or if they get worse, it may mean that PTSD has developed.

Over **7 MILLION** adults in the U.S. have PTSD in a given year.

Symptoms:

- Hyperarousal**
- ✦ Constantly feeling that the trauma is going to reoccur
- ✦ Difficulty sleeping
- ✦ Inability to concentrate
- Avoidance/Numbing**
- ✦ Feeling disconnected from reality
- ✦ Loss of interest in life
- ✦ Withdrawing from family and friends



Intrusion

- ✦ Flashbacks or vivid nightmares of the event
- ✦ Frequent, disturbing memories of the event
- ✦ Intense physical reaction to reminders of the event

14% to 30%
of veterans develop PTSD.

TREATMENT

- ✦ **Early treatment is essential** in preventing PTSD from causing other problems. Treatment may include **antidepressant medications** and **therapy**.
- ✦ **Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT)** exposes individuals to situations that **evoke memories** of the trauma and works to **correct irrational cognitive patterns**.
- ✦ **Exposure therapy** provides a safe environment where individuals **re-experience** the trauma through **mental imagery, virtual reality, or writing exercises**.
- ✦ **Eye movement and desensitization reprocessing (EMDR)** combines **therapy with eye movements** that serve to **reduce the anxiety** that comes with thinking about the trauma.
- ✦ **Family therapy** improves **communication** and **relationship problems** that have arisen since the diagnosis of PTSD.

RISK FACTORS

People at risk for developing PTSD:

- ✦ Experienced trauma early in life.
- ✦ Have been through intense or lengthy trauma.
- ✦ Lack social support after the trauma.
- ✦ Have mental health problems or relatives with mental health problems.

RESILIENCE FACTORS

After the trauma, the risk of developing PTSD is reduced by:

- ✦ Getting support from mental health professionals, family, or friends.
- ✦ Developing a coping strategy.
- ✦ Avoiding drugs and alcohol.
- ✦ Maintaining an optimistic outlook.
- ✦ Exercising.

50%
of veterans with PTSD do not seek treatment.

Recovery from PTSD happens slowly and gradually as the memories of the traumatic event fade in intensity.

Overcoming PTSD with therapy takes dedication and persistence, but it is possible for those who have suffered to get back to leading their normal lives.

GET HELP EARLY TO BE **HAPPY AND HEALTHY!**