

# 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 **13 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

## 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.

PTSD may be **3%** more likely among veterans who deployed.

## 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.

**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!**