

Adult Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

What is Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder or PTSD?

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a trauma and stress related disorder that may develop after a person is involved in or witnesses a frightening event that threatened his or her physical safety or the safety of others. Although many people experience personal traumas or disasters such as fires, car accidents, natural disasters, or war, not all who experience these kinds of events develop PTSD. Those who develop PTSD likely experienced a sense of helplessness or terror during the event. PTSD is a serious condition that can interfere with an individual's ability to work, maintain relationships, and engage in self-care activities (e.g., bathing, brushing teeth).

The experience of PTSD may include Re-experiencing, Avoidance, and Arousal -

Re-experiencing the event may include:

- Unwanted, intrusive memories of the event that the individual cannot seem to control
- Flashbacks or frightening memories that feel like the trauma is happening again
- Nightmares about the event

Avoidance related to the trauma may include actively seeking to steer clear of anything that is reminiscent of the event. This may include avoiding related:

- sights
- sounds
- places
- people

Psychological or physical arousal may include:

- Anger, irritability
- Difficulty sleeping
- Difficulty concentrating
- Hyper-sensitivity to surroundings
- Being easily startled

PTSD may also be associated with:

- Depression and sadness
- Headaches, stomachaches, dizziness, chest pain
- Worry and anxiety
- Difficulty concentrating

PTSD usually starts within three months of a traumatic event, but it can also begin years after a trauma. Both adults and children can develop PTSD. According to the National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) more than seven million adult Americans are diagnosed with PTSD each year. People who have had past traumas in their lives, including childhood abuse, are more likely to experience PTSD if they experience another severe trauma.

What causes PTSD?

PTSD may develop after a traumatic event. The kinds of experiences that can cause PTSD include rape, mugging, physical and sexual abuse, fire, kidnapping, hurricanes, accidents or war. PTSD used to be called "shell shock" because soldiers returning from battle often experienced related symptoms. Research shows that terrifying experiences can cause changes in a person's brain chemistry that may lead to PTSD symptoms.

How can PTSD be treated?

There are multiple effective treatments for PTSD. Several kinds of talking therapies help manage PTSD symptoms. Specific therapies include exposure therapy, cognitive restructuring, and stress inoculation training. More information about these therapies can be found on the websites listed below. Medications have been found to be useful in managing PTSD symptoms. Getting counseling and talking about what has happened after a traumatic event can sometimes prevent PTSD from developing.

In addition, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) is an innovative clinical treatment used to alleviate PTSD symptoms. MHA of Westchester has clinicians who are trained and certified in EMDR.

Additional Information About PTSD

[National Institute of Mental Health \(NIMH\)](#)

NIMH is an agency of the United States government that does research on mental illnesses. This site has simple, easy-to-read information on all disorders, their causes, symptoms and effective treatments.

[Mental Health America \(MHA\)](#)

MHA is a national organization dedicated to promoting mental health through education and advocacy. This site has clear, detailed information on PTSD, including research on its causes.

Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General

This is the first report on mental health from the United States Surgeon General. It was issued in December 1999. This site provides information from research studies on how stressful events affect people and effective treatments for such persons.

National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Founded in 1989, the National Center for Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is a clearinghouse for all information and activities related to PTSD and is widely sought out for its research, education and consultation expertise. The site contains facts about PTSD as well as information about research and treatment.

Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR)

This site provides information on Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing (EMDR) including an overview and general description. It also includes a section on training, publications, controlled studies and clinician referrals. It is maintained by the EMDR Institute.