

Understanding Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

In this material, we will explore the various aspects of post-traumatic disorder (PTSD) to help you better understand and manage the condition.

Defining Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a mental health condition that can develop after someone experiences or witnesses a traumatic or distressing event. It affects the way you think, feel and react, especially when faced with objects, places or individuals related to the traumatic event.



Symptoms of PTSD

Understanding the symptoms associated with PTSD is crucial for recognising and managing the condition effectively.

Re-Experiencing Symptoms

Having unwanted, intrusive memories that keep coming back, such as flashbacks and nightmares, which make it as though the traumatic event is being relived. This results in the experience of intense distress.



Avoidance Symptoms

Deliberate efforts to avoid anything reminding individuals of the trauma, including places, people or even talking about it.



Negative Changes in Mood and Thinking

Feelings of guilt, shame, or detachment from others may arise, including thinking about oneself and the world in a negative manner.



Hyperarousal Symptoms

Feeling on the edge or jumpy. Difficulty sleeping, being easily startled and sudden outbursts (with little or no trigger) may occur.



Duration and Timing of Symptoms

Symptoms typically start within a few months of the traumatic event, and can last for several months or even years if left untreated.



Causes and Risk Factors of PTSD

Understanding causes and risks factors helps individuals become more aware of the potential for PTSD and take preventive steps.

Common Causes of PTSD	PTSD is often caused by traumatic events, such as accidents, natural disasters and situations where someone experiences or witnesses a violent act (e.g., physical assaults, robberies). The severity of the trauma affects the likelihood of developing PTSD. If the trauma is more severe, there is a higher chance of developing PTSD.
Risk Factors	Someone who has existing mental health conditions, previous trauma experiences, limited coping skills and a lack of social support is at a higher risk of developing PTSD.
Protective Factors	Having strong social support and effective ways to cope with stress can reduce the risk of developing PTSD.

Treatment Approaches for PTSD

PTSD can be effectively managed through various treatment approaches including:

Psychotherapy

- Psychotherapy is a collaborative process where a psychologist works with individuals in finding ways to improve their well-being.
- It involves talking with a trained psychologist in a safe and confidential setting.



Medications

- In some cases, medication may be prescribed by a psychiatrist to manage specific symptoms such as anxiety, depression and sleep difficulty.
- It is important to note that medication is not a "magic cure," but it may help alleviate symptoms. There are also possible side effects, hence it is important to discuss any concerns you have regarding medication with your healthcare provider.



Work with your healthcare provider to determine the best approach for your unique situation. It is important to communicate openly with your provider about your progress and any concerns you may have.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about PTSD

Can PTSD go away on its own without seeking treatment?

PTSD doesn't usually go away on its own and many people find that their symptoms persist or worsen over time without intervention. Seeking treatment can improve the chances of recovery.

Can PTSD recur?

Yes, PTSD can recur, especially if someone experiences another traumatic event or stressor. However, with the right coping strategies and support, individuals can better manage future challenges.

PTSD is a challenging but treatable condition. Be patient with your progress as recovery takes time. Early intervention is crucial and seeking professional help can make a significant difference.

Contributed by Psychology (Allied Health Service) and Medical Psychiatry

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