

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): Do I Need Help?

PTSD is a condition involving a prolonged reaction to a traumatic event that causes significant distress to daily functioning.¹

A traumatic event involves actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence.¹ It can be one event or a series of repeated exposures. Trauma exposure can occur through:¹

- Directly experiencing or witnessing another's direct experience of the traumatic event
- Indirectly learning of a trauma experienced by a close friend or family member
- Repeated or extreme exposure to details of traumatic events

Experiencing a traumatic event does not necessarily lead to the development of PTSD. There are a range of responses to traumatic events. Some individuals have symptoms that last a short time and have little impact on daily functioning, and other individuals have symptoms that become chronic, if left untreated.²



What are the signs and symptoms of PTSD?

PTSD has four types of symptoms:¹

1. Reliving the event through intrusive memories, dreams, thoughts about the traumatic event, or by seeing someone who reminds you of the trauma
2. Avoiding situations that remind you of the event
3. Experiencing a negative mood and negative thoughts about yourself, others, or the world
4. Feeling keyed up or always on alert for danger

An assessment by a mental health provider can assist in making an appropriate diagnosis and in initiating a course of treatment. PTSD is a treatable condition.



When should you seek help?

If you are experiencing symptoms that cause you great distress or disrupt your daily activities and relationships, you should talk to a mental health or primary care provider. They can determine if you should be further assessed for PTSD.



What are some treatment options for PTSD?²

- **Evidence-Based Psychotherapy:** Cognitive Processing Therapy, Eye Movement Desensitization and Reprocessing, or Prolonged Exposure
- **Medication Management:** Although individual psychotherapies are usually recommended first, there are also recommended medications for the treatment of PTSD

Please seek help immediately if you are experiencing thoughts of death or suicide, call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Resources



Military OneSource provides 24/7 support and information on housing, financial, legal, medical, and psychological services.

- State-side: 800-342-9647
- Overseas: 800-342-9647
- Collect: 484-530-5908

<https://www.militaryonesource.mil>



988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline and the associated **Military/Veterans Crisis Line** provides free and confidential support for individuals in crisis. If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, call or text **988** or <https://988lifeline.org>; you can also press 1 or text 838255 to chat live with a counselor focused on military and veteran callers (<https://www.veteranscrisisline.net>).



inTransition offers specialized coaching and assistance for active duty service members, National Guard members, reservists, veterans, and retirees to help callers with their mental health care as they transition between systems of care.

- State-side: 800-424-7877
- Overseas: 800-748-81111 (in Australia, Germany, Italy, Japan, and South Korea only)

<https://www.health.mil/inTransition>

1. American Psychiatric Association. (2022). *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders* (5th ed., text rev.). <https://doi.org/10.1176/appi.books.9780890425787>

2. Department of Veterans Affairs & Department of Defense. (2023). *VA/DOD clinical practice guideline for management of posttraumatic stress disorder and acute stress disorder*. (Version 4.0). <https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/ptsd/index.asp>

Note: This content is derived from the 2023 VA/DOD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Acute Stress Disorder.



Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense health care providers who use this information are responsible for considering all applicable regulations and policies throughout the course of care and patient education. Created October 2023 by the Psychological Health Center of Excellence.