

# Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

is a natural emotional response to frightening or dangerous experiences that involve actual or threatened serious harm to oneself or others. However, for some people, the thoughts or memories of these events seriously affect their lives, long after any real danger has passed. These types of experiences are called “traumatic.”

**Your mental health matters. Know when to seek help.**



## 1 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

Usually appears within three months of the event, but sometimes symptoms may not appear for years. Common symptoms include:

- re-experiencing the traumatic event over and over
- having recurring nightmares
- experiencing unwanted, disturbing memories of the event
- acting or feeling as if the event is happening again
- feeling upset when reminded of the event
- staying away from activities, places or people that are reminders of the traumatic experience
- avoiding friends and family

## 2 SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS

- losing interest in activities that used to be enjoyable
- experiencing difficulty having loving feelings
- being unable to feel pleasure
- constantly worrying
- having a hard time concentrating
- getting angry easily
- having trouble falling asleep or staying asleep
- fearing harm from others
- experiencing sudden attacks of dizziness, fast heartbeat or shortness of breath
- having fears of dying.

## 3 RISK FACTORS:

- experiencing dangerous events and trauma in the past
- having a history of mental health or substance use problems
- feeling helplessness or extreme fear
- having a small support system after the traumatic event
- feeling guilt, shame or responsibility for the event or its outcome
- experiencing additional stress after the event (e.g. loss of a loved one, pain and injury, loss of a job or home).

## 4 PROTECTIVE FACTORS:

- having support from other people, such as friends and family
- participating in a support group after a traumatic event
- feeling confident about one's own actions regarding the event
- having a coping strategy or a way of getting through the traumatic event
- being able to act and respond effectively despite feeling fear.

## 5 TREATMENT

Trauma counselling or therapy, whether done alone or in a group, can be extremely beneficial to persons suffering from PTSD. Relationship issues can be helped through family counselling and individual treatment. Depression, anxiety, and sleep issues, which are prevalent in patients with PTSD, can be treated with medication prescribed by psychiatrists and family doctors.

## 6 TREATMENT

Having support following a traumatic event is very important for those with PTSD. Some examples of helpful supports include:

- family service agencies
- community mental health agencies, counsellors or therapists
- family doctors
- community health centres
- religious leaders
- settlement agencies
- workplace employee assistance programs (EAPs).