



PTSD: Know the Signs

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and trauma are often spoken about in casual settings to describe the general anxieties of life. But true PTSD is not merely a case of feeling anxious or stressed — it involves enduring trauma that fundamentally alters an individual's psyche. It encompasses haunting flashbacks, crippling anxiety, and a profound sense of disconnection from oneself and others. Those who experience PTSD are often grappling with symptoms that can last for decades. Those who experience PTSD often grapple with symptoms that can last decades, and trauma is a risk factor in nearly all behavioral health and substance use disorders.

Symptoms of PTSD

Reaction to trauma may vary but typical symptoms include:

- Nightmares
- Reliving the event or “flashbacks”
- Unpleasant, uncontrollable thoughts
- Feelings of sadness, guilt or worry
- Irritability
- Problems falling or staying asleep
- Avoiding reminders of the event
- Feeling alone or isolated
- Angry outbursts
- Feelings of wanting to hurt yourself
- Feelings of wanting to hurt others

Children may show additional or different symptoms:

- Withdrawal-type symptoms
- Refusing to speak
- Refusing to leave the house
- Refusing to play with friends
- Acting younger than their age
- Stomachaches or headaches

Although such symptoms may seem unhealthy, they are reasonable responses to having experienced a traumatic event.

Getting help

PTSD is more common than most people realize, and treatment is readily available. A good starting point is your primary physician. Your doctor may prescribe medications that help minimize the physical aspects of PTSD. He or she may refer you to another resource, such as a mental health professional, who can guide you through resolving your feelings. Getting help quickly will help get your symptoms under control and get your life back on track sooner.

See a doctor immediately if:

- Symptoms persist for more than one month
- You have a significant impairment in everyday functioning
- You feel like your life is spinning out of control
- You are having thoughts of self-harm or assault

#HealTrauma

If you or someone you know is struggling with trauma, you can find additional resources through the National Center for PTSD, including the PTSD Coach mobile app. Veterans can contact the Veteran Crisis Line by dialing 988, then pressing 1.

