Center for Integrated Healthcare

VA HEALTH CARE Defining EXCELLENCE in the 21st Century

Information from your Patient Aligned Care Team

Frequently Asked Questions About PTSD

From National Center for PTSD

What is PTSD?

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health disorder that can occur after you have been through a trauma. A trauma is something horrible and scary that you see or that happens to you. During this type of event, you think that your life or others' lives are in danger. You may feel afraid or feel that you have no control over what is happening.

If you have gone through an event that could have caused injury or death, you can develop PTSD. Examples of these events can include:

- Combat or war exposure
- Child sexual or physical abuse
- Terrorist attacks
- Sexual or physical assault
- Serious accidents, such as a car wreck.
- Natural disasters, such as a fire, tornado, hurricane, flood, or earthquake.

After the event, you may feel scared, confused, and angry. If these feelings don't go away or if they get worse, you may have PTSD. These symptoms may disrupt your life, making it hard to continue with your daily activities.

What treatments are available for PTSD?

There are many types of treatment for PTSD. You and your doctor will discuss the best treatment for you. You may have to try more than one treatment before you find the best one for you.

Two types of treatment appear to be the most effective for PTSD at this time. They are:

- a type of counseling called cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT)
- medicines known as SSRIs

Treatment can help you feel more in control of your emotions and result in fewer symptoms. However, even with treatment, you may still have some bad memories.

How do I locate specialists or support groups for PTSD?

If you are in crisis:

- call 911
- go to your nearest Emergency Room
- call the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (1-800-273-8255)
    - Spanish/Español 1-888-628-9454
    - Veterans, press "1" after you call

The National Center does not provide any direct clinical care. We can provide information, though, to help you locate mental health services in your area.

I am an American Veteran. Whom do I contact for help with PTSD?

You can contact your local VA hospital or Vet Center.

VA also has Community Based Outpatient Clinics (CBOC's) around each state. Many of these clinics offer mental health services.

Other resources include:

- The VA Health Benefits Service Center toll free at 1-877-222-VETS
- The Vet Centers' national number 1-800-905-4675

As an American Veteran, how do I file a claim for disability due to PTSD?

You must file a formal request ("claim") using forms provided by the VA's Veterans Benefits Administration. After the forms are submitted, you must complete interviews. Information about the application process can be obtained from Benefits Officers at any VA medical center, outpatient clinic, or regional office.

The process of applying for a VA disability for PTSD can be long and stressful. Veterans Service Organizations (VSOs) provide "Service Officers" at no cost to help Veterans and family members with VA disability claims.

Do you have brochures, handouts, or videos?

Our website contains many types of information. These materials were created by experts on PTSD and trauma: We have:

- fact sheets
- handouts
- award-winning educational videos
- online courses
- manuals
- guides

The resources are intended for Veterans, families, mental health care providers, other health care providers, and researchers. We cover topics such as war, natural disaster, terrorism, assault, and abuse.

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