

Fact Sheet

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety based mental illness characterized by hyper-vigilance, re-living and social isolation. PTSD is a very serious disorder that can affect the safety and wellbeing of the individual and those around them. Severe and/or untreated PTSD can lead to brain damage, an inability to function in society, development of further mental illness and even death. Anyone can be affected by PTSD regardless of age, gender, ethnicity, socioeconomic class or culture.

As many as 800,000 Australians suffer from Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) at any given time

Signs

- Re-experiencing the trauma through nightmares and vivid memories of the event
- Difficulty sleeping
- A person frequently thinking that they might die or that something bad will happen
- A pounding heart, shortness of breath, dizziness, chest pain, sweating, or flushes
- Feeling detached from the world or a sense of unreality
- Avoiding situations or thoughts related to the event
- Having a desire to escape
- A sense of losing control
- avoiding reminders of the event
- being overly alert or wound up
- feeling emotionally numb
- Being easily startled
- Experiencing episodes of panic.



Managing

DO

- Seek help from a health practitioner
- Learn more about PTSD
- Find support from family and friends
- Join a support group
- Learn about your triggers
- Acknowledge and accept your PTSD
- Take time to reflect and heal

DON'T

- use alcohol or drugs to try to cope
- keep yourself busy and work too much
- engage in stressful family or work situations
- withdraw from family and friends
- stop yourself from doing things that you enjoy
- avoid talking about what happened
- take risks

Causes

PTSD can develop after an individual witnesses, experience or learns of a traumatic event. Traumatic events could be:

- Family and domestic violence
- Sexual assault
- Death of family/friend
- War
- Natural disaster
- Divorce/family breakdown
- Neglect
- Threatened with a weapon
- Accident
- Near death experience
- Torture/kidnapping
- Terrorism

Some people are more susceptible to developing PTSD if they have:

- Prolonged stress
- Chronic mental illness
- Multiple traumatic experiences
- Familial history
- Chemical imbalance
- Brain injury

Zonta House Refuge Association provides support services to women who have experienced family and domestic violence, mental health issues, homelessness and other crises enabling them the opportunity to make safe and sustainable life choices. For more information or support, visit our resource page at www.zontahouse.org.au