

What is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder?

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened. Military combat can trigger PTSD, which can be extremely disabling.

Who develops PTSD?

People who served in combat or who were POWs are among those at risk for developing PTSD.

When does PTSD first occur?

PTSD symptoms typically begin within three months of a traumatic event, but might not begin until years later.

What are the symptoms of PTSD?

Many people with PTSD repeat the ordeal in the form of flashback episodes, nightmares or frightening thoughts, especially when they are exposed to events or objects reminiscent of the trauma. People with PTSD also experience emotional numbness, sleep disturbances, depression, anxiety, irritability or outbursts of anger. Feelings of intense guilt also are common. Most people with PTSD try to avoid any reminders or thoughts of the trauma. PTSD is diagnosed when symptoms last more than one month.

How common is PTSD?

About 30% of veterans who have spent time in war zones experience PTSD, according to the National Center for PTSD (www.ncptsd.org).

Who can get treatment and where?

VA's Readjustment Counseling Service offers treatment at its 206 Vet Centers nationwide to veterans suffering from PTSD. The Vet Center sees vets from all wars and even those who served in places like Grenada. Every state has at least one center and some have more—California has 23. Vet Centers are critical for veterans and their families in the post-war adjustment phase. Readjustment and trauma counseling are just two areas of concentration at the centers. To find the nearest Vet Center, visit www.va.gov/rcs and click on Vet Center Directory. For more information, write:

Readjustment Counseling Service (15)
810 Vermont Ave. NW
Washington, D.C. 20420

Other resources for veterans suffering from this disorder include the National Center for PTSD. Its Web site www.ncptsd.org contains a world of information ranging from treatment options to PTSD links. For immediate information, contact the PTSD Information Line at (802) 296-6300 or e-mail ncptsd@ncptsd.org.

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VFW Can Help You

Veterans Helping Veterans

Since 1899, VFW has been a driving force in getting earned benefits for veterans. Through our network of accredited and certified service officers, we can help you navigate the Veterans Affairs health care and benefits system. Our VFW service officers want to help you get the satisfaction and benefits you deserve.

Call VFW Veterans Service for Assistance

To file a claim, please contact the nearest VFW representative or call our toll-free HelpLine at 1-800-VFW-1899. Also, a list of VFW service officers is available on the Internet at www.vfwdc.org. Click on "National Veterans Service" then click on "Directory." Or e-mail us at vfw@vfwdc.org.

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