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Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

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Symptoms

By Mayo Clinic staff

Signs and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder typically begin within three months of a traumatic event. In a small number of cases, though, PTSD symptoms may not occur until years after the event.

Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms are commonly grouped into three types: intrusive memories, avoidance and numbing, and increased anxiety or emotional arousal (hyperarousal).

Symptoms of intrusive memories may include:

- Flashbacks, or reliving the traumatic event for minutes or even days at a time
- Upsetting dreams about the traumatic event

Symptoms of avoidance and emotional numbing may include:

- Trying to avoid thinking or talking about the traumatic event
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Avoiding activities you once enjoyed
- Hopelessness about the future
- Memory problems
- Trouble concentrating
- Difficulty maintaining close relationships

Symptoms of anxiety and increased emotional arousal may include:

- Irritability or anger
- Overwhelming guilt or shame
- Self-destructive behavior, such as drinking too much
- Trouble sleeping
- Being easily startled or frightened
- Hearing or seeing things that aren't there

Post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms can come and go. You may have more post-traumatic stress disorder symptoms during times of higher stress or when you experience reminders of what you went through. You may hear a car backfire and relive combat experiences, for instance. Or you may see a report on the news about a rape, and feel again the horror and fear of your own assault.

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Medication Guide

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