

PTSD & Trauma

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) can develop after an individual has experienced, witnessed, or been repeatedly exposed to trauma. Exposure to events like actual or threatened death, serious injury or sexual violence can lead to PTSD.

Occurrence & Prevalence

8% of Canadians who undergo a traumatic event in their life experience PTSD. People in certain occupations like emergency personnel (doctors, nurses, paramedics, and firefighters) are twice as likely to experience PTSD. 10% of war zone veterans go on to experience PTSD. Diagnosis of PTSD in women is twice as likely as men. Indigenous people, particularly those impacted by the genocidal experiences of residential schools, are at particular risk for PTSD.

Symptoms

People with post-traumatic stress disorder may experience the following symptoms:

Intrusions or ‘Flashbacks’

Recurring thoughts or dreams about the traumatic event.

Avoidance

Consciously or unconsciously avoiding stimuli that reminds them of the traumatic events.

Negative mood

Crying without apparent reason, feeling hopeless, angry, guilty, or numb.

Feeling “on edge”

Easily startled or overly alert of situations, being in an irritable mood, having problems falling asleep and feeling constantly on guard.

Treatments that Work

Psychotherapy – Using Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT), a therapist can teach skills to cope with harmful thoughts, feelings and behaviours and overcome the anxiety associated with them. Often, CBT includes exposure therapy in which the person is guided to re-live parts of the traumatic event to face and overcome the fears.

Support groups – Anxiety support groups may be helpful for people experiencing PTSD to realize that they are not alone, and that their feelings and experiences are valid.

Medication – Certain anti-depressants or anti-anxiety medications may be helpful in managing symptoms and preventing relapses.

Resources – [Self-help strategies for PTSD](#), Anxiety Canada

References – Canadian Mental Health Association BC: [Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder](#)

Canadian Psychological Association: [Facts about Traumatic Stress and PTSD](#)