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POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

What is post-traumatic stress disorder?

Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) happens after experiencing something extremely frightening, like violence, abuse, rape or a life-threatening situation. It can also affect someone if they witnessed something awful happening, such as a serious accident.

Most people take time to get over a traumatic event, but with PTSD, it is difficult to move past the event and dreams, flashbacks or upsetting thoughts about it continue for a long time. Complex PTSD (C-PTSD) is a more serious reaction to a long-lasting traumatic experience, for example abuse, neglect or frequent violence.

Symptoms can appear straight after a traumatic experience, or later on. They are usually noticed within six months of the experience.

Signs and symptoms

- avoidance and numbing, where you try to keep busy and avoid thinking about or doing things that might trigger memories of the traumatic event
- flashbacks or nightmares about what happened
- being tense and on guard (hypervigilant) all the time in case it happens again.

Other possible experiences

- depression
- anxiety
- anger or irritability
- physical symptoms such as muscle aches or diarrhoea
- problems sleeping or eating
- survivor's guilt, where they feel bad because others suffered more than them
- problems with alcohol or drug abuse
- difficulty remembering all of the traumatic event.