

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a mental health condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a traumatic event. This leaflet provides general information about PTSD and how it is understood in psychiatric care.

What Is PTSD?

PTSD can occur after events that involve:

- Threat to life or physical safety
- Serious injury
- Sexual violence
- Repeated or prolonged trauma

Not everyone who experiences trauma develops PTSD. Responses to trauma vary widely.

Common Symptoms of PTSD

PTSD symptoms are often grouped into several areas:

Re-Experiencing

- Intrusive memories
- Nightmares
- Distressing reminders of the event

Avoidance

- Avoiding thoughts, feelings, or reminders
- Withdrawing from people or situations

Hyperarousal

- Feeling constantly on edge
- Irritability or anger
- Sleep difficulties
- Heightened startle response

Changes in Mood and Thinking

- Emotional numbness
- Persistent negative beliefs
- Feelings of guilt or shame

Not everyone experiences all symptoms.

How PTSD Affects Daily Life

PTSD can affect:

- Sleep and energy
- Concentration and memory
- Relationships
- Work or study
- Sense of safety and trust

Symptoms may fluctuate and can be triggered by reminders of the trauma.

Trauma and the Nervous System

PTSD involves ongoing activation of the body's **threat response system**, even when danger is no longer present.

This response is automatic and not a sign of weakness or failure.

Diagnosis and Assessment

Diagnosis is based on:

- Clinical assessment
- Symptom patterns
- Duration and functional impact

Assessment is often gradual, and diagnosis may be reviewed over time.

Treatment Approaches

Treatment for PTSD may include:

- Trauma-focused psychological therapies
- Medication where appropriate
- Strategies to support regulation and safety

Treatment is paced carefully and tailored to individual readiness and needs.

Recovery and Outlook

Many people with PTSD:

- Experience improvement with appropriate treatment
- Learn ways to manage triggers and symptoms
- Regain a sense of safety and control

Recovery is often **gradual and non-linear**, with periods of progress and setbacks.

PTSD and Work

PTSD symptoms may temporarily affect work capacity.

Supportive adjustments and gradual return-to-work plans are often helpful and reviewed over time.

When to Seek Help

Professional support is recommended if:

- Symptoms persist beyond several weeks
- Daily functioning is affected
- You feel unsafe or overwhelmed

Early support can reduce long-term impact.

Summary

PTSD is a recognised and treatable response to trauma.

With appropriate care, many people experience meaningful recovery and improved quality of life.
