

PTSD 101

Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is a medically-diagnosed mental health condition that can develop after exposure to one or more traumatic events.

COMMON CAUSES

PTSD can develop after experiencing, witnessing or learning the details of a traumatic event.

Threat of injury or death
Serious accident
Combat

Terrorist attack
Sexual assault
Physical assault

Natural disaster
Childhood sexual or physical abuse

A diagnosis of PTSD requires the presence of symptoms from FOUR different categories.



1 INTRUSIONS

Recurring distressing memories, dreams or flashbacks



2 AVOIDANCE

Of people or places that remind them of the trauma



3 PERSISTENT NEGATIVE MOOD OR THOUGHTS

Inability to recall the traumatic event or experience positive emotions; excessive blame, fear, shame, guilt; detachment from others



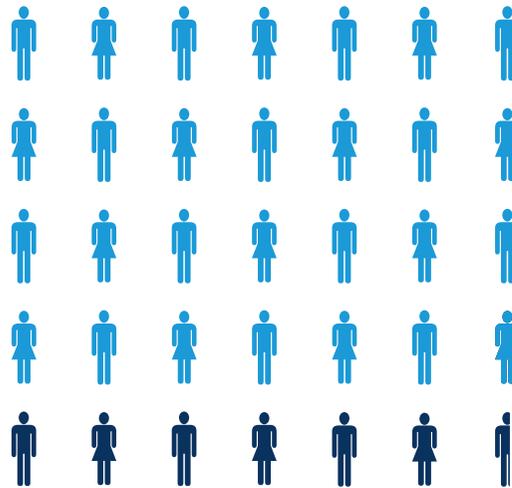
4 AROUSAL OR REACTIVITY

Irritability, hypervigilance, difficulty concentrating, self-destructive behaviors

SYMPTOM CATEGORIES

BY THE NUMBERS

Between 2000–Sept. 2017, about **173,000 active-duty service members** were diagnosed with PTSD in the Military Health System.



About **139,000** of those were diagnosed following a deployment of **30 days or more.**

† = 5,000 active-duty service members
Source: Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch

TREATMENTS

The first line of treatment recommended for PTSD is individual, trauma-focused psychotherapy.

EVIDENCE-BASED PSYCHOTHERAPIES

Trauma-focused psychotherapies use cognitive, emotional, or behavioral techniques to process a traumatic experience. Most therapies involve eight to 16 sessions and include these core techniques:

- Exposure to traumatic images or memories
- Exposure to avoided thoughts or situations that trigger feelings of anxiety
- Cognitive restructuring focused on identifying and changing troublesome thinking patterns and beliefs



MEDICATION INTERVENTIONS



For patients who choose not to engage in or do not have access to trauma-focused psychotherapy, the following medications are recommended:

- Selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors (SSRIs) of fluoxetine, paroxetine, or sertraline
- Serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor (SNRI) of venlafaxine

These medications are also used to treat symptoms of depression and anxiety.

PTSD is treatable. Talk to your health care provider today.