



Signs and Symptoms of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

There are three main kinds of symptoms that doctors look for when diagnosing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These include re-experiencing symptoms, avoidant symptoms and symptoms of increased arousal.

Re-experiencing symptoms include ways in which the person persistently re-experiences the traumatic event. These symptoms may include the following:

- intrusive memories of the traumatic event
- recurrent, distressing dreams about the traumatic event
- acting or feeling as if the traumatic event is reoccurring
- mental and physical discomfort when reminded of the traumatic event (e.g. on the anniversary of the traumatic event)

Avoidant symptoms are ways in which the person tries to avoid anything associated with the traumatic event. These symptoms may also include a “numbing” effect, where the person’s general response to people and events is deadened. Avoidant symptoms include the following:

- avoiding thoughts or feelings, people or situations (anything that could stir up memories) associated with the traumatic event
- not being able to recall an important aspect of the traumatic event
- reduced interest or participation in significant activities
- feeling disconnected from others
- showing a limited range of emotion
- having a sense of a shortened future (e.g., not expecting to have a normal life span, marriage or career)

Symptoms of increased arousal may be similar to symptoms of anxiety or panic attacks. Increased arousal symptoms include the following:

- difficulty concentrating
- exaggerated watchfulness and wariness
- irritability or outbursts of anger
- difficulty falling or staying asleep
- being easily startled

For help with easing your anxiety, contact your PCM or behavioral health care provider.

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