

# 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 2000-2014, **149,000** active-duty service members were diagnosed with PTSD in the Military Health System



**122,000** of those were diagnosed following a deployment of 30 days or more

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

## TREATMENTS

PTSD is treatable. Effective treatments include:

### EVIDENCE-BASED PSYCHOTHERAPIES OR COUNSELING

Trauma-focused cognitive therapies that include the following components

#### Anxiety Management Techniques

Involves learning and practicing techniques including meditation, progressive muscle relaxation or deep breathing exercises which lower anxiety or feelings of stress

#### Cognitive Restructuring

Involves identifying and changing troublesome thinking patterns and beliefs

#### Exposure Therapy

Involves thinking about or being in situations which trigger feelings of anxiety

### MEDICATION INTERVENTIONS

#### Antidepressant medications

Strong research supports the use of the selective serotonin reuptake inhibitors fluoxetine, paroxetine, or sertraline and the serotonin norepinephrine reuptake inhibitor venlafaxine as prescribed by your doctor

#### Alpha-blocker medications

Prazosin is approved for use as an adjunct to antidepressant medications to help reduce or control nightmares