



The Facts About Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

- Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) affects 7.7 million American adults and women are more likely to suffer from this disorder than men. People who have experienced previous traumatic experiences are far more likely to develop PTSD.
- PTSD can occur at any age, although it is far less common in older Americans. Children who have been exposed to a tragic event often have nightmares or relive the incident through play. They may also exhibit physical symptoms like headaches and stomachaches.
- PTSD is the result of exposure to traumas, such as serious accidents, natural disasters, criminal assaults, witnessing death, violence, the unexpected death of a loved one, or terrorist attacks. Response to trauma includes intense fear, helplessness, and/or horror.
- One study estimates that 8 percent of Manhattan residents living below 110th Street (approximately 67,000 people) have probable PTSD related to the events of 9/11. In addition, 2 to 4 percent of Americans appear to have PTSD related to these attacks.¹
- The main symptoms of PTSD include:
 - Reliving the traumatic event through flashbacks or nightmares
 - Avoiding places or things related to the disturbing event
 - Emotional numbness or detaching oneself from others
 - Physical symptoms such as insomnia, irritability, or poor concentration
- For PTSD to be diagnosed, the symptoms must be present for over one month and must be associated with increased difficulty in the ability to socialize, work, or perform daily functions.
- The symptoms of PTSD usually begin within three months of a trauma, although sufferers may experience a delayed onset of up to several years. The effects of PTSD may vary in intensity and frequency over time.
- Rape is the most likely trigger of PTSD. Sixty-five percent of men and 45.9 percent of women who are raped will develop the disorder.²

¹ Galea, Sandro, M.D., M.P.H., et al., "Psychological Sequelae of the September 11 Terrorist Attacks in New York City," *New England Journal of Medicine* (March 28, 2002).

² The American Psychiatric Association Web site, www.psych.org.