

# Recognizing and Managing PTSD: A Guide for Frontline Medics



## What is PTSD?



**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** is a mental health condition that can develop after experiencing or witnessing a terrifying event. For frontline medics, repeated exposure to trauma can significantly increase the risk.

### Common Symptoms of PTSD:

#### Re-experiencing Symptoms (Intrusive Memories):

- **Flashbacks:** Reliving the trauma as if it's happening again.
- **Nightmares:** Distressing dreams about the traumatic event.
- **Severe Reactions:** Emotional or physical distress triggered by reminders of the trauma.
- **Unwanted Memories:** Distressing, intrusive thoughts of the event.

#### Negative Changes in Thinking and Mood:

- **Negative Thoughts:** Persistent negative beliefs about yourself or the world.
- **Guilt and Shame:** Feelings of guilt, shame, or misplaced blame.
- **Memory Gaps:** Difficulty recalling aspects of the traumatic event.
- **Detachment:** Feeling estranged or disconnected from others.
- **Emotional Flatness:** Loss of ability to experience positive emotions.

- These symptoms can manifest at any time, even months or years after the traumatic event.
- Recognizing these symptoms in yourself or your colleagues is the first step towards seeking help.
- It's not a sign of weakness to experience PTSD. It's a normal reaction to abnormal circumstances.

#### Avoidance Symptoms:

- **Avoidance:** Steering clear of people, places, or activities that remind you of the trauma.
- **Suppression:** Refusing to talk or think about what happened.
- **Emotional Numbing:** Feeling detached or emotionally distant from others.
- **Loss of Interest:** Diminished engagement in previously enjoyed activities.

#### Increased Reactivity

- **Hyperarousal:** Being easily startled or constantly on edge.
- **Sleep Disturbances:** Difficulty sleeping or insomnia.
- **Irritability and Anger:** Frequent irritability, angry outbursts, or aggressive behavior.
- **Concentration Problems:** Difficulty focusing or concentrating.
- **Risky Behaviors:** Increased engagement in risky or self-destructive actions.

### You Are Not Alone

- Talk to a trusted colleague, superior, or mental health professional.
- Connect with Family and Friends: Lean on your support network outside of work.
- Mental health support is available. Please reach out to VM4U Psychological Support team at [psych@vm4u.org](mailto:psych@vm4u.org)



<https://vm4u.org/psychological-support/>

Remember:

Your mental health is just as important as your physical health.

