

## POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER

Depending upon when you grew up, you may have heard the term "shell shock" or "battle fatigue." We now use the term post-traumatic stress disorder.

People sometimes develop this disorder after a war, but there are other causes as well. It can happen after a person or a loved one witnesses or goes through a terrible event. Such events include military combat, rape or sexual assault, physical attack, torture, natural disasters, or being kidnapped or held hostage. Two people may experience the same event while, only one, might end up with the disorder.

People with post-traumatic stress disorder often have:

- \* feelings of worthlessness or uneasiness
- \* recurring thoughts of the event
- \* frustration and rage
- \* guilt over how they could have reacted differently
- \* shame over their helpless response and
- \* anxiousness and/or depression

Other symptoms include:

- \* problems falling or staying asleep
- \* angry outbursts or otherwise blunted emotions
- \* marital problems
- \* staying on the alert at all times and
- \* drug and/or alcohol abuse

A variety of treatments can help:

- \* stress reduction techniques, such as biofeedback and relaxation
- \* social support in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder support groups
- \* psychotherapy for help in recovering from the event
- \* medical support to help with insomnia, depression, and substance abuse issues

Be sure to let your healthcare provider know what you are facing, so that he or she can assist you with medical care through your healing process.

If you have been sexually abused or raped, call your local sexual abuse or rape crisis center for help. If you have been the victim of a crime, your local county attorney's office may be able to refer you to a victim support group.