



# BetterSafe

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR FAMILY'S SAFETY

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT PTSD



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that some people develop after seeing or living through an event that caused or threatened serious harm or death. Symptoms include flashbacks or bad dreams, emotional numbness, intense guilt or worry, angry outbursts, feeling “on edge,” or avoiding thoughts and situations that remind them of the trauma. In PTSD, these symptoms last at least one month. PTSD can happen to anyone at any age. Children get PTSD too.

You don't have to be physically hurt to get PTSD. You can get it after you see other people, such as a friend or family member get hurt. Living through or seeing something that's upsetting and dangerous can cause

PTSD. This can include:

- › Death or serious illness of a loved one
- › War or combat
- › Car accidents and plane crashes
- › Hurricanes, tornadoes, and fires
- › Violent crimes, like a robbery or shooting.

There are many other things that can cause PTSD. Talk to your doctor if you are troubled by something that happened to you or someone you care about.

### HOW DO I KNOW IF I HAVE PTSD?

Your doctor can help you find out. Call your doctor if you have any of these problems for at least 1 month:

- › Suffering from bad dreams
- › Feeling like the scary event is happening again (flashbacks)
- › Experiencing scary thoughts you can't control
- › Staying away from places and things that remind you of what happened
- › Feeling worried, guilty, or sad



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- › Sleeping too little or too much
- › Feeling on edge
- › Fighting with loved ones or frequent angry outbursts
- › Thoughts of hurting yourself or others
- › Feeling alone.
- › Refusing to go places or play with friends.

## WHEN DOES PTSD START?

PTSD starts at different times for different people. Signs of PTSD may start soon after a frightening event and then continue. Other people develop new or more severe signs months or even years later.

## TREATMENT

PTSD can be treated. A doctor or mental health professional who has experience in treating people with PTSD can help you. Treatment may include “talk” therapy, medication, or both.

Treatment might take 6 to 12 weeks. For some people, it takes longer.

Treatment is not the same for everyone. What works for you might not work for someone else.

Drinking alcohol or using other drugs will not help PTSD go away and may even make it worse.

## FACTS ABOUT PTSD

- › PTSD can affect anyone at any age.
- › Millions of Americans get PTSD every year.
- › Many war veterans have had PTSD.
- › Women tend to get PTSD more often than men.
- › PTSD can be treated. You can feel better.

Children who have PTSD may show other types of problems. These can include:

- › Behaving like they did when they were younger
- › Being unable to talk
- › Complaining of stomach problems or headaches a lot



## DON'T HURT YOURSELF

- ✓ You are not alone. Get help if you are thinking about hurting yourself.
- ✓ Call your doctor.
- ✓ Call 911 if you need help right away.
- ✓ Talk to a trained counselor at the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255)



# Day In Day Out

WELCOA'S ONLINE BULLETIN FOR YOUR LIFESTYLE

## PREGNANCY PROBLEMS?

*Boost the Chance of Having a Baby*



For those who dream of being parents, pregnancy problems can be tremendously frustrating and disappointing. In recent decades, scientists have developed a wide range of approaches to help struggling couples have healthy babies.

Infertility is a fairly common condition. It affects about 1 in 10 couples who are trying to have a baby. Infertility can be traced to the man in about a third of these cases and to the woman in another third. The rest of the time, the difficulties lie with both partners or no cause can be found.

### COMMON CULPRITS

Fertility troubles can arise in any of the steps needed for a successful pregnancy. To get pregnant, a woman's body must first release an egg from one of her ovaries, a process called ovulation. The man's sperm then has to join with, or "fertilize," the egg. The egg must then travel through a passageway known as the fallopian tube and head toward the woman's uterus (womb). The fertilized egg must then attach to the inside of the uterus (implantation).

Infertility can be related to a man if there are problems with the number, shape, or movement of sperm. These glitches can make it hard for the sperm to fertilize the egg. About 1 in 5 infertile men have sperm troubles because of a hormone imbalance, which can sometimes be corrected with medication.

"Another common identifiable cause of male infertility

occurs when a man has large veins around the testicle, which makes the whole scrotum warmer than it should be. The heat decreases the production and quality of sperm," says Dr. Peter N. Schlegel, who specializes in treating male infertility at Cornell University. This condition, called varicoceles, is usually harmless, but it can be corrected with surgery if it's causing infertility. Surgery can also help to remove blockages that prevent sperm release.

For women, the most common cause of infertility has to do with ovulation problems, which affect about 40% of women who have pregnancy trouble. "Ovulatory problems occur when a woman ovulates irregularly or not at all," says Dr. Linda Giudice, a reproductive health expert at the University of California, San Francisco. "Causes can include stress-related lack of or irregular periods, polycystic ovary syndrome (PCOS), advanced maternal age, and a variety of other possible factors, like hormone issues that can interrupt normal ovulation."



# Day In Day Out

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Other common causes of female infertility include blocked fallopian tubes or conditions that affect the health of the egg or its implantation after fertilization.

In the United States, older maternal age is a growing contributor to fertility problems. About 1 in 5 women nationwide now have their first child after age 35. Once a woman reaches this age, fertility complications arise in about 1 of every 3 couples trying to have a baby. Studies suggest that after age 30, a woman's chances of getting pregnant decrease every year, especially after age 37.

In some cases, infertility can be corrected through lifestyle changes, such as losing weight or stopping

tobacco use. If this doesn't work, doctors may recommend medication, surgery, artificial insemination (in which a woman is injected with specially prepared sperm), or assisted reproductive technology, which is usually the most expensive and complex option. Assisted reproductive technology includes different methods for fertilizing eggs, usually outside of the body.

For couples who have tried to have a baby without success, experts recommend seeking medical help after at least a year of trying if the woman is younger than 35, or after 6 months if the woman is age 35 or older. It's also a good idea for couples to talk with a health care provider before even trying to get pregnant.

## WHAT RAISES YOUR RISK FOR INFERTILITY?

### **BOTH MEN AND WOMEN:**

- Excess alcohol use
- Smoking
- Older age

### **MEN:**

- Environmental toxins, including pesticides and lead
- Health issues such as diabetes, hormone problems, or kidney disease
- Certain medicines
- Radiation treatment and chemotherapy for cancer

### **WOMEN:**

- Stress
- Poor diet
- Being over- or under-weight
- Sexually transmitted infections
- Health problems that cause hormonal changes, such as polycystic ovary syndrome or primary ovarian insufficiency





# TakeCharge

WELCOA'S ONLINE SELF-CARE BULLETIN



## KNOW STROKE, KNOW THE SIGNS, ACT IN TIME

Each year in the United States, there are more than 800,000 strokes. Stroke is a leading cause of death in the country and causes more serious long-term disabilities than any other disease. Nearly three-quarters of all strokes occur in people over the age of 65 and the risk of having a stroke more than doubles each decade after the age of 55.

### WHAT IS A STROKE?

A stroke is serious—just like a heart attack. A stroke is sometimes called a “brain attack.” Most often, stroke occurs when blood flow to the brain stops because it is blocked by a clot. The brain cells in the immediate area begin to die because they stop getting the oxygen and nutrients they need to function.

There are two kinds of stroke. The most common kind of stroke, called ischemic stroke, is caused by a blood clot that blocks or plugs a blood vessel in the brain. The other kind of stroke, called hemorrhagic stroke, is caused by a blood vessel that breaks and bleeds into the brain.

Stroke damage in the brain can affect the entire body - resulting in mild to severe disabilities. These include paralysis, problems with thinking, problems with speaking, and emotional problems.

### STROKE SYMPTOMS

- Sudden numbness or weakness of the face, arm, or leg (especially on one side of the body)
- Sudden confusion, trouble speaking or understanding speech
- Sudden trouble seeing in one or both eyes
- Sudden trouble walking, dizziness, loss of balance or coordination

- Sudden severe headache with no known cause

Because stroke injures the brain, you may not realize that you are having a stroke. The people around you might not know it either. Your family, friends, or neighbors may think you are confused. You may not be able to call 911 on your own. That's why everyone should know the signs of stroke - and know how to act fast.

Don't wait for the symptoms to improve or worsen. If you believe you are having a stroke—or someone you know is having a stroke—call 911 immediately. Making the decision to call for medical help can make the difference in avoiding a lifelong disability.



# TakeCharge

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Every minute counts. The longer blood flow is cut off to the brain, the greater the damage. The most common kind of stroke, ischemic stroke, can be treated with a drug that dissolves clots blocking the blood flow. The window of opportunity to start treating stroke patients is three hours. But a person needs to be at the hospital within 60 minutes of having a stroke to be evaluated and receive treatment.

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO PREVENT A STROKE?

While family history of stroke plays a role in your risk, there are many risk factors you can control. The best treatment for stroke is prevention. You can reduce your risk of having a stroke by taking action to improve your health.

› If you have high blood pressure, work with your doctor to get it under control. Many people do not realize they have high blood pressure, which usually produces no symptoms but is a major risk factor for heart disease and stroke. Managing your high blood pressure is the most important thing you can do to avoid stroke.

- › If you smoke, quit.
- › If you have diabetes, learn how to manage it. As with high blood pressure, diabetes usually causes no symptoms but it increases the chance of stroke.
- › If you are overweight, start maintaining a healthy diet and exercising regularly.





# To Your Health

WELCOA'S ONLINE GENERAL WELLNESS BULLETIN

## Minding Your Metabolism

### CAN YOU AVOID MIDDLE-AGE SPREAD?



As you age, you may notice you have less muscle and energy and more fat. Carrying those extra pounds may be harming your health. It's easy to be confused by advice about diet and exercise, but they're key to avoiding weight gain as you get older. As you move through your 30s, 40s, 50s, and beyond, you can take steps to help fight the flab that can come with age.

Your metabolism changes as you get older. You burn fewer calories and break down foods differently. You also lose lean muscle. Unless you exercise more and adjust your diet, the pounds can add up. Middle-age spread can quickly become middle-age sprawl.

#### CAN YOU SLOW DOWN THE PROCESS?

"At some point, everyone loses muscle mass as they get older and gains abdominal fat," says National Institutes of Health (NIH) Dr. Mark Mattson, an expert on aging and exercise. The so-called couch-potato lifestyle is the main culprit behind middle-age spread. "Over-eating and leading a sedentary lifestyle can speed up age-related changes in metabolism," Mattson says.

One key player in age-related changes is a chemical called leptin, which helps your brain tell you to stop eating. Leptin signals don't work as well as you get older, so you might continue to feel hungry even after you've eaten. Obesity makes leptin even less effective.

"There's a reward part to everything you eat," says Dr. Josephine M. Egan, an NIH expert on diabetes and aging.



# To Your Health

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“You get the taste of the food. You feel good. Normal-weight people will satisfy cravings by having a small amount of what they crave.” As both the years and the pounds add up, however, you may need to eat more of what you crave to get the same pleasant sensation.

Both aging and obesity can also bring changes to the way your body processes glucose—the sugar your body makes from food and uses for energy. These changes can lead to diabetes, which raises your risk for heart disease, blindness, amputations, and other conditions.

“Obesity increases the risk, and reduces the age of onset, for many diseases of aging,” Mattson says. “Over the long-term, even our brains are affected. Emerging evidence suggests that long-standing diabetes and obesity can lead to changes in brain cells that make them vulnerable to aging.”

As you move beyond your 50s, you'll probably need fewer calories. But it's also important to maintain proper nutrition, so don't skimp on healthy foods. Weighing too little and weighing too much are each linked to poor health, especially in older people.

## SMALL STEPS TO HEALTHY AGING

- Commit to a healthy diet.
- Limit snacking.
- Drink plenty of water.
- Move more. Take the stairs and add walking breaks to your day.
- Get plenty of sleep.
- Limit alcohol use. Alcohol is high in calories and may worsen health conditions common among older adults.
- Avoid tobacco products.

Exercise and moving are also important. “It doesn't matter what your age is; physical activity is good for you,” says Egan. Be sure to talk with your health care provider about safe ways to adjust your activity patterns as you get older. If you have a specific health issue that you're concerned about—such as arthritis or a recent surgery—ask for tips to help you exercise safely. Work together to choose activities that are best for you.

Focusing on physical activity and healthy eating are the keys to avoiding middle-age spread and the health problems that can come with it.

