

# Facts for Families

## The Children's Home

### Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD has become common language in today's world, but what actually is it? PTSD develops in some people who have seen or lived through a shocking, scary, dangerous or life threatening event. A child's risk of developing PTSD is related to the seriousness of the trauma, whether the trauma is repeated, the child's proximity to the trauma, and his/her relationship to the victim(s) or to the assailant(s).



A child, regardless of age, with PTSD may display symptoms such as:

- ☹ Depression
- ☹ Anxiety
- ☹ Withdraw from others/isolation
- ☹ Being detached from their feelings
- ☹ Frequent memories of the event
- ☹ Nightmares
- ☹ Feeling or acting like the event is happening again
- ☹ Developing repeated physical or emotional symptoms when the child is reminded of the event
- ☹ Worrying about dying at an early age
- ☹ Loss of interest in activities
- ☹ Headaches or stomachaches
- ☹ Sudden and extreme emotional reactions
- ☹ Problems falling or staying asleep
- ☹ Irritability
- ☹ Angry outbursts
- ☹ Problems concentrating
- ☹ Acting younger than their age
- ☹ Showing increased alertness/ Hypervigilance

**Help is Available**

[www.tchcincy.org](http://www.tchcincy.org)

513-272-2800

**After hours crisis line:**

513-748-1461



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Once a traumatic event has occurred, early intervention is key. Support from parents, school and peers are important. Establishing a feeling of **safety** is one of the most critical factors in treating PTSD. Parents and/or caregivers should also seek professional help for the child immediately.

### Treatment

Talk therapy - Individual, group and family therapy which allows the child to speak, draw, play or write about the event is helpful.

Therapy can include education about symptoms, teaching skills to help identify the triggers of symptoms, and skills to manage the symptoms. Medication such as antidepressants may also be useful to deal with agitation, anxiety, depression or anger.

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### **Hints for Parents**

Get professional help immediately if you have any concern that a child has thoughts of self-harm. Thoughts of suicide are serious at any age and should be treated right away.

Try to keep kids' schedules and lives as similar as possible to before the event. This means not allowing your child to take off too much time from school or activities, even if it's hard at the beginning.

Reassure them that their feelings are normal and that they're not "going crazy." Support and understanding from parents can help with processing difficult feelings.

Help build self-confidence by encouraging kids to make everyday decisions where appropriate. PTSD can make kids feel powerless, so parents can help by showing their kids that they have control over certain aspects of their lives. Depending on the child's age, parents might consider letting him or her choose a weekend activity or decide things like what's for dinner or what to wear.

Tell them that the traumatic event is not their fault.

Encourage kids to talk about their feelings of guilt, but don't let them blame themselves for what happened.



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