



# Coping with Stress after a Major Incident

You may find this leaflet helpful if you have been involved in or affected by a traumatic incident.

It provides information on how you may feel in the days and months ahead, and helps understand and have more control of your experience.

It is intended for adults. There is a separate leaflet to assist with children.



If you have been involved in a major incident, your experience is likely to be a very personal one.

## What you can do to help yourself or others

**Remember, adjustment is a gradual process, and everyone reacts differently.**

Recognise it may take some time before you feel anything. At first you may feel numb and the incident may seem unreal. Over time, with support from family and friends, these feelings are likely to pass. In the meantime....

### Do

- Take time out to get sufficient sleep (your normal amount), exercise, rest, relax, and eat regularly and healthily.
- Talk to others about your experience and how you are feeling
- Keep your life as normal as possible. Try to reduce outside demands on you and don't take on extra responsibilities for the time being.

Be more careful around the home and drive more carefully - accidents are more common after a stressful event.

- Make time to go to a place where you feel safe and calmly go over what happened in your mind. Don't force yourself to do this.

### Don't

- Bottle up your feelings. Talk about what happened with someone you trust.
- Expect the memories to disappear straight away.
- Get embarrassed by your feelings and thoughts, or those of others. They are normal reactions to a stressful event.
- Avoid people you trust.

## You might need help if you have been experiencing any of the following reactions for several weeks and there is no sign of them getting better:

- Wanting to talk about what happened and feel you don't have anyone to share your feelings with.
- Finding that you are easily startled and agitated.
- Vivid images of what you saw and have intense emotional reactions to them.
- Disturbed sleep, disturbing thoughts preventing you sleeping or dreams and nightmares.
- Experience of overwhelming emotions that you feel unable to cope with or experience changes in mood for no obvious reason.
- Tiredness, loss of memory, palpitations (rapid heartbeat), dizziness, shaking, aching muscles, nausea and diarrhoea, poor concentration, breathing difficulties or a choking feeling in your throat and chest.
- Feeling emotionally numb.
- Relationships seem to be suffering since the incident.

- Worry about your alcohol or drug use since the incident.
- Your performance at work since the incident.
- Someone close to you tells you they are concerned about you.

## Where to find more help

Contact **your GP** for support or, if your GP surgery is closed and you feel you can't wait until it re-opens, call **NHS 24 free on 111**

These websites also have more information on post traumatic reactions.

[www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/posttraumaticstressdisorder.aspx](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsdisorders/posttraumaticstressdisorder.aspx)

[www.nhsinform.scot/ptsd](http://www.nhsinform.scot/ptsd)