

Major Trauma

Looking after your emotional well-being following a physical injury

This leaflet is designed to provide you with some advice and information about your emotional well-being, and how this might be affected after a physical injury.

It is normal to experience psychological symptoms after a physical trauma, and these symptoms should improve with time without any further input. After (and during) a traumatic event, your body's defence mechanism is initiated (flight or fight response), which may make you feel a variety of physical symptoms such as increased heart rate/sweating/blood pressure etc. You also may behave differently and experience more intense emotions such as shock, denial, anger, guilt etc.

Common symptoms after a physical injury

Depression/ low mood

- Continuous low mood or sadness
- Feelings of hopelessness or helplessness
- Having a low self-esteem
- Feeling tearful
- Feeling guilty
- Feeling irritable and intolerant of others
- Having no motivation or interest in things
- Difficulty in making decisions
- Not getting enjoyment out of life
- Having suicidal thoughts or self-harm
- Feeling anxious or worried



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Anxiety

- Feeling worried or uneasy
- Sleeping problems
- Lack of concentration
- Being irritable
- Having “butterflies” in your tummy
- Faster breathing
- Pounding heartbeat or palpitations
- Feeling sick
- Chest pain
- Headaches
- Feeling faint
- Feeling tearful
- Feeling on the edge
- Sweating
- Chest pain
- Headaches

The above symptoms are common after experiencing a physical trauma. Our bodies often react in these quite normal ways following an unusual and distressing experience – this is a normal adjustment in response to an abnormal time.

These symptoms will normally resolve on their own. However, you may need some additional support to manage any difficulties you may notice, for example if you are unable to participate in rehab or if you are unable to return to your normal daily activities.

Initial management of symptoms

Everyone has normal stresses in their daily lives such as work, family, relationships etc. and generally they are able to manage their stress on a day-to-day basis. We each have developed our own ways of coping with stress, however not all coping strategies are helpful. Adaptive coping strategies can include things like relaxation, exercise, getting enough sleep, having a healthy diet etc. It is not helpful to turn to drinking alcohol, taking drugs, working long hours etc. as it may impact our emotional well-being in the longer term.

After having a physical trauma, you may find it hard to cope with daily stresses despite using your normal coping strategies - for example, difficulties with housework, childcare etc. As a result, you may develop issues with your emotional well-being. Therefore, it is important to ask for

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help as soon as possible if you or your family notice that you are struggling to cope.

Talking to friends/family

For many people, family and friends play a key role in their emotional recovery from trauma. Sometimes you may not feel like talking to family or friends about your traumatic event, but you may find it helpful to talk through your thoughts and feelings with someone, especially those who have experienced something similar themselves. In this case, consider contacting community and voluntary organisations.

Self help

There are many different ways you can help your own recovery. Self-help works because the treatment strategies themselves are beneficial, and it also allows you to make positive choices and may give you a sense of control in your life.

This can include things such as meditation, doing activities you enjoy (for example listening to music, going for a walk, creative activities, watching a film etc.), exercise, mindfulness activities or relaxation etc.

Professional help

Some people can develop more serious and prolonged symptoms that last beyond 4-6 weeks. You may be at home at this point and may not be sure what to do. It is important to let someone know if your symptoms aren't improving, and if these symptoms are affecting your daily activities or personal relationships.

If things aren't improving after 4 weeks, then you should consider seeking professional help. This is so you can begin to recover and improve your wellbeing. Research has shown that a person with mental health issues will generally recover quicker with professional support.

To begin with you should make an appointment with your GP who can provide you with advice and treatment, and they can also refer you to

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mental health professionals in your local area. They may also provide you with contact numbers for you to self-refer to local services.

If you develop any suicidal thoughts, it is important to contact someone as soon as possible (e.g. Samaritans – see below for further details, or your local mental health crisis team).

National information sources:

You can find accurate, reliable and up-to-date information from the following websites, also listed are some online support groups, many of them have forums or discussion rooms for interactive support:

Anxiety Care UK

Online information and support to those with anxiety, phobias and OCD
www.anxietycare.org.uk

Anxiety UK

Online information and support to those with anxiety, panic disorders, PTSD, stress, phobias and OCD

<https://www.anxietyuk.org.uk/>

Infoline: 08444 775 774

NB – fee to access information

Assist Trauma Care

Charity offering therapeutic help for adults, children, individuals and family affected by a wide range of traumatic occurrences

<http://assisttraumacare.org.uk>

Advice line: 01788 560 800

British Association for Counselling and Psychotherapy

Online information about types of counselling and therapy, which also includes a therapy directory to find a contact list of therapists in England and Wales

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www.bacp.co.uk

Tel: 01455 883 316

Citizens advice

Online information regarding benefits, employment, debt, housing, legal services, family and immigration

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

CRUSE Bereavement Care

A charity offering advice and support to both adults and children, following the death of someone close

www.cruse.org.uk

Helpline: 0808 808 1677

Depression UK

A charity to provide support to those with or at risk from depression; by encouraging self-help, recovery and personal growth

www.depressionuk.org

Major Trauma Signposting Partnership

Legal and rehabilitation information

Tel: 0330 043 7679

Email: mtsp@uhcw.nhs.uk

Mental Health Matters

Online information and support with issues affecting your mental health – e.g. employment, debt, housing, benefits etc.

Tel: 0800 616 171

www.mhm.org.uk

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Mind Infoline

Online information, support and services for anyone experiencing a mental health problem

<https://www.mind.org.uk>

NHS Choices – Your health, your choices

Online information about mental health conditions, diagnosis and treatment

www.nhs.uk

NHS Talking Therapies

Services are for people with mild, moderate and moderate to severe symptoms of anxiety or depression living in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire or Northampton.

An online self-referral form for Cov, Solihull or Warwick is found at www.talkingtherapies.covwarkpt.nhs.uk/about-nhs-talking-therapies

Tel: 02476 671 090

An online self-referral form for Northampton is found at

www.nhft.nhs.uk/talkingtherapies

Tel: 0300 999 1616

Rethink

Online information about different mental health conditions, and provides details of support services in your local area

<https://rethink.org>

Advice line: 0300 500 0927

Samaritans

Confidential support for people experiencing feelings of distress or despair

www.samaritans.org

Tel: 08457 90 90 90 (24-hour helpline)

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Victim Support

An independent charity that offers support and practical help to those who are affected by crime or trauma

www.victimsupport.org.uk

Tel: 0808 168 9111

The following websites may also be useful:

These websites contain downloadable self-help resources including leaflets, worksheets and videos.

- <https://selfhelp.cntw.nhs.uk/>
- www.getselfhelp.co.uk
- www.wellbeing-glasgow.org.uk
- www.headspace.com
- www.freemindfulness.org

Further Information

Further information can be obtained from the **Health Information Centre**.

This is situated in the Main Entrance opposite the reception. The Staff can:

- Provide information on any health-related topic
- Refer you to other agencies, both local and national
- Provide internet access

Open Monday - Friday 9.00am - 5.00pm (excluding Bank Holidays)

Telephone: 024 7696 6051

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this information in another language or format, please contact the Major Trauma Department on 02476 968425 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smoke-free policy.

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Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us make further improvements and recognise members of staff who provide a good service.

Have your say. Scan the QR code or visit:

www.uhcw.nhs.uk/feedback



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