



Data Points

CWHS

RESULTS FROM THE CALIFORNIA WOMEN'S HEALTH SURVEY

The prevalence of problems related to post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been grossly under-recognized.¹ New data suggest that people who experience a trauma may develop significant functional impairment even though their symptoms do not meet the full criteria for a diagnosis of PTSD.

PTSD is an anxiety disorder that may develop after a person has experienced, witnessed, or learned about an extremely traumatic event in which there has been an actual or perceived threat of death, serious injury, or other psychological threat such as an automobile accident, sexual or physical assault, or natural disaster.¹ Symptoms can include intrusive thoughts of the traumatic event, severe insomnia, emotional numbness, or avoidance of anything that serves as a reminder of the event.

Generally, women with PTSD symptoms have more medical problems and poorer functional status than women without PTSD symptoms. National data recently released suggest that 8% of individuals in the United States will experience PTSD symptoms in their lifetime.¹

The 2000 California Women's Health Survey asked women, "Thinking back over your entire lifetime, have you ever had

any experience or experiences that were frightening, horrible or upsetting?"

Women were also asked a set of four questions about symptoms of PTSD in the preceding 12 months. These questions included having nightmares associated with those experiences, avoiding situations that are reminders of the event, being constantly on guard or easily startled, or feeling numb or detached from others or your surroundings.

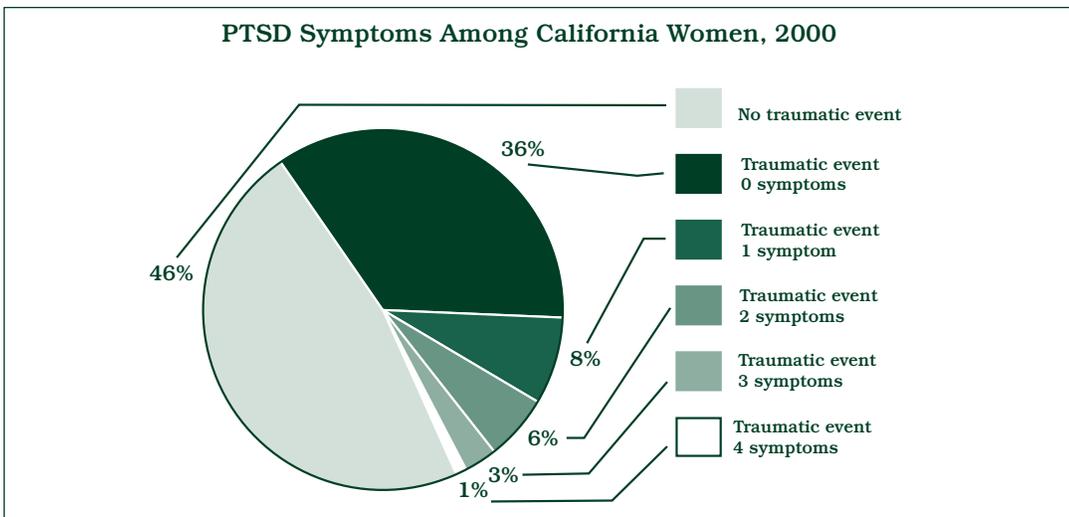
- Over half (54%) of all women reported that they have had a frightening, horrible, or upsetting event at some point in their lifetime.
- Of all women, 36% reported that they have had a traumatic experience in their lifetime but that they did not have any of the four symptoms of PTSD mentioned above.
- Of all women, 8% reported that they have had a traumatic experience in their lifetime and reported having one of the four PTSD symptoms; 6% reported having two symptoms; 3% reported having three symptoms, and 1% reported having all four symptoms.

POST TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER SYMPTOMS AMONG WOMEN, CALIFORNIA, 2000

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Public Health Message: PTSD is a health problem affecting about 10% of California women surveyed. Because women with PTSD symptoms have more medical problems, primary care providers need to be aware of these PTSD symptoms in their patients so they can be referred to appropriate care.

¹ "The Prevalence of Problems Related to PTSD Grossly Under-Recognized", paper presented at the 154th Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association, May 10, 2001 in New Orleans, LA, by Dr. Randall Marshall, Director of Trauma Studies at the Anxiety Disorders Clinic, New York State Psychiatric Institute and Associate Professor, Columbia University.



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