

Learning About Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)



What is ASD?

Acute stress disorder (ASD) is a short-term mental health condition that can happen after a traumatic event. This is an event in which someone is threatened or badly injured, like a car crash. People with ASD may have flashbacks or feel like they're reliving the event. ASD lasts less than 1 month.

What causes it?

You can get ASD if you witness or go through a traumatic event. You also can get it if you learn that a loved one had a traumatic event. People who are exposed to lots of traumatic events can also get ASD. For instance, this can happen to police officers and health care workers.

How is it diagnosed?

Your doctor will ask you about the traumatic event. You'll also be asked about your symptoms, how long you've had them, and how they affect your life. Your doctor may ask if you have other conditions, like a brain injury.

What are the symptoms?

When you have acute stress disorder, you may:

- Have disturbing memories and dreams about the traumatic event. You may feel like you're reliving the event (flashbacks). Things that remind you of the event can cause this, like smells or noises.
- Be unhappy often. For instance, you may feel like you can't get joy or satisfaction from life.
- Feel like nothing is real. For example, you may feel like you're not in your body or that you're watching things from far away. You may not remember important parts of the event.

- Avoid thoughts about the event. You may stay away from people or places that remind you of the event.
- Struggle with your emotions. For example, you may have trouble sleeping, feel angry a lot, be on alert for danger, and have trouble focusing.

If your symptoms last longer than 1 month, tell your doctor. You may have another condition called post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

How is it treated?

ASD is treated with counseling. Cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) is a common type of counseling for ASD. It focuses on changing certain thoughts and behaviors. This can help with the symptoms. CBT also may help prevent post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Medicines are sometimes used to treat ASD.

Where can you learn more?

Go to <https://www.healthwise.net/patiented>

Enter **S127** in the search box to learn more about "**Learning About Acute Stress Disorder (ASD)**".

©2006-2022 Healthwise, Incorporated.

This care instruction is for use with your licensed healthcare professional. If you have questions about a medical condition or this instruction, always ask your healthcare professional. Healthwise, Incorporated disclaims any warranty or liability for your use of this information.