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Our first contact partners:

**Integrierte Psychiatrie Winterthur –
Zürcher Unterland
Psychiatrische Poliklinik
(Integrated Psychiatric Hospital Winterthur –
Zurich Unterland
Psychiatric Outpatient Department)**

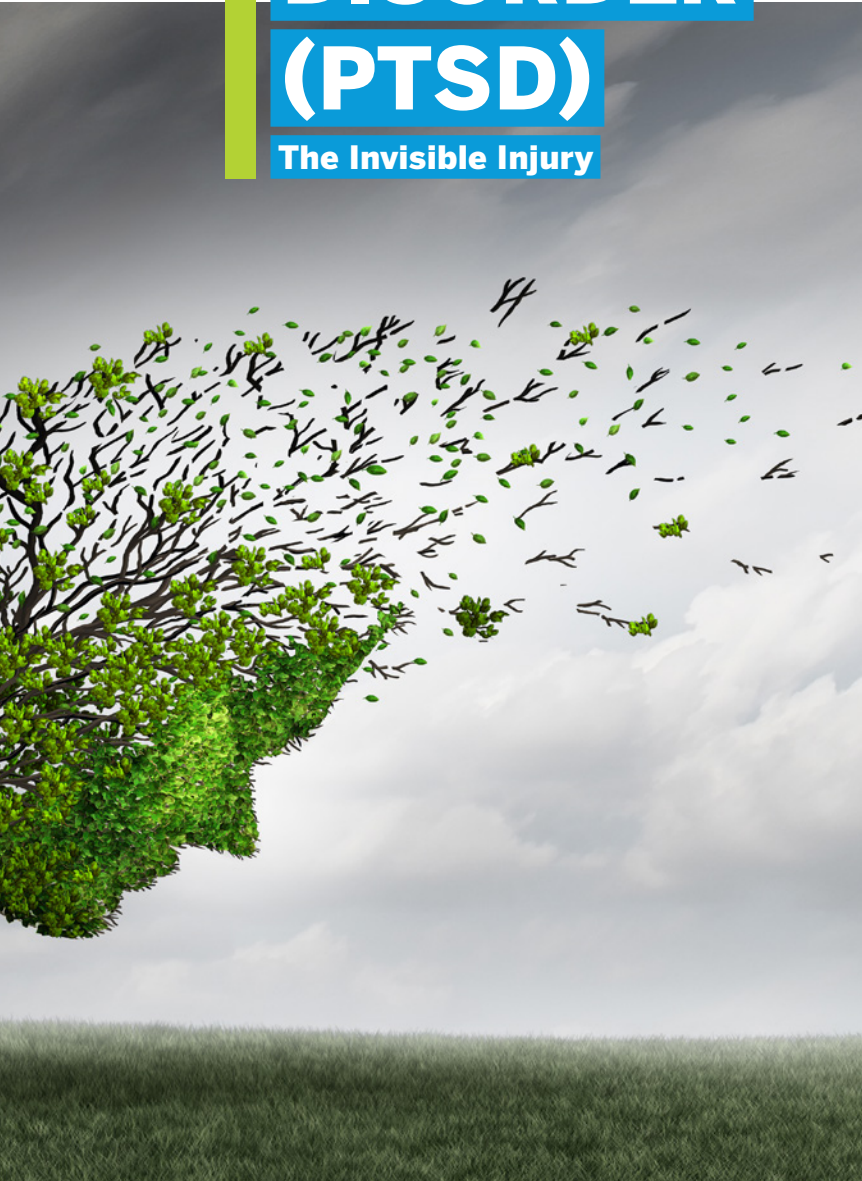
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*Klinik für
Orthopädie und
Traumatologie
(Clinic for
Orthopaedics and
Traumatology)*

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

The Invisible Injury



Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) – Information for patients

PTSD and its symptoms

Experiencing serious accidents, violence, natural disasters, technical disasters, war or torture is extremely stressful. Such experiences are called trauma. These often provoke severe emotional reactions in the short term, such as fear, helplessness or horror. Physical injuries after trauma are clearly visible. However, such experiences can also be a mental shock, which leads to an externally unrecognisable mental injury. A common consequence of trauma is post-traumatic stress disorder.

Typical symptoms of this include:

- Recurring memories of trauma
- Attempts to forget and avoid everything related to the experience
- Tension and nervousness
- Feelings are numb and strange
- Anxiety, insomnia or jumpiness

Such stress symptoms are common in the short term. This usually changes quickly, and they usually disappear after a few days or weeks. However, if such symptoms persist or worsen, this may indicate the development of post-traumatic stress disorder.

Frequency

- More than half of people experience at least one traumatic event in their lives.
- Of these, 10% develop PTSD.
- Women are twice as likely to experience the disorder as men.
- Other problems often occur alongside PTSD, such as depression, anxiety disorders, psychosomatic disorders, drug, alcohol, or substance abuse.

The course of the disorder

The course of the illness is very individual. If PTSD is detected early and those affected receive professional support from trained professionals, the prognosis is favourable. However, as sufferers often avoid anything related to the trauma, many of them do not talk to their doctor about the problems. Unfortunately, PTSD often remains untreated for many years and becomes chronic.

The treatment

PTSD should be treated by psychiatric specialists, psychologists or psychotherapists. Depending on the person and the severity of the illness, various therapeutic elements are used, adapted to the needs of the person concerned:

Psychotherapy

Within the framework of a trusting therapeutic relationship, the patient is guided to deal with the traumatic experience by means of so-called exposure procedures and to relive the unpleasant emotions associated with it. The symptoms of PTSD diminish as a result of such a confrontation.

Medications

Depending on the severity of the symptoms, antidepressants can be helpful in alleviating the often very distressing symptoms (anxiety, sleep disorders, re-experiencing the trauma, nervousness).

Additional treatment elements

Depending on the person, physiotherapy, occupational therapy or social worker support can also be helpful. It is important to include family members in the treatment

Do you have children?

Children's suffering as a result of a parental accident/illness is often underestimated. They try to hide their fears from their parents in order to protect them. It is important that they, too, have the opportunity to talk about their concerns and get support.

Contact

If you experience any stress symptoms after leaving hospital and would like psychiatric or psychological counselling, you can contact the Psychiatric Outpatient Department of the Integrated Psychiatric Hospital Winterthur (ipw) (see overleaf).

For children and adolescents

Department of Psychotraumatology,
Social Paediatric Centre SPZ of Cantonal
Hospital Winterthur, Tel. 052 266 37 13.