

POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

How is heart disease related to PTSD?

People with mental disorders often show increased rates of co-occurring physical conditions such as heart disease. An increased risk of heart disease in people with PTSD may be a consequence of the disorder itself as PTSD is associated with dysfunction of the immunological system and excess inflammation, which in turn is associated with significant cardiovascular health problems. Unhealthy lifestyle factors such as smoking and poor diet may also contribute to any increased risk of heart disease and these factors are also prevalent in people with PTSD.

What is the evidence for heart disease in people with PTSD?

High quality evidence finds a small increased risk of coronary heart disease in people with PTSD (with or without comorbid depression) compared to people without PTSD.

Moderate quality evidence finds large effects of lower high-frequency and RMSSD (root mean square of the successive differences) heart rate variability in people with PTSD. These effects were largest in clinical populations. There was also a small increased risk of lower resting respiratory sinus arrhythmia. There was no change in low-frequency heart rate variability. The results remained similar regardless of medication status, year of publication, study quality score, study methodology, or participant age or sex.

Moderate to high quality evidence finds a small association between increased PTSD symptoms and increased cardio-respiratory symptoms in general.

For more information see the technical table

HOW YOUR SUPPORT HELPS

We are able to make significant advances due to the generosity of countless people. Your donation allows us to continue to work towards transforming lives. For information on how you can support our research, phone **1300 888 019** or make a secure donation at **neura.edu.au/donate**

NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) Foundation T 1300 888 019 F +61 2 9399 1082 ABN 57 008 429 961 Margarete Ainsworth Building Barker Street, Randwick NSW 2031 PO Box 1165 Randwick Sydney NSW 2031 Australia

August 2021



NeuRA (Neuroscience Research Australia) is one of the largest independent medical and clinical research institutes in Australia and an international leader in neurological research.

Diseases of the brain and nervous system pose the greatest health, economic and social burden of any disease group because they are chronic, debilitating and have no known cures.

Medical research is the cornerstone of efforts to advance the health and wellbeing of families and the community. Our dedicated scientists are focussed on transforming their research into significant and practical benefits for all patients.

While we hope you find this information useful, it is always important to discuss any questions about PTSD and its treatment with your doctor or other health care provider.