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POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

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How is sleep apnea relevant to people with PTSD?

People with mental disorders may show increased rates of co-occurring conditions such as sleep apnea. The most common form of sleep apnea is obstructive sleep apnea (OSA), which is seen in around 5-10% of the general population and occurs when the muscles of the upper airway relax in such a way that they block the airway during sleep. As a result, OSA is associated with daytime sleepiness, cognitive dysfunction, and the development of hypertension, cardiovascular disease, and abnormalities in glucose metabolism. OSA also has adverse effects on quality of life and can lead to anxiety and depression symptoms.

What is the evidence for sleep apnea in people with PTSD?

Moderate quality evidence finds around half of people with PTSD have obstructive sleep apnea. Rates are highest in veterans, in older people, and in people diagnosed using the apnea-hypopnea index with a cut-off of five rather than ten events per hour of sleep.

A common treatment for obstructive sleep apnea is continuous positive airway pressure, and moderate quality evidence found large improvements in PTSD symptoms and reduced nightmares after treatment.

For more information see the technical table



NeuRA
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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.

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