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POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER Factsheet

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How is substance use relevant to PTSD?

Drug and alcohol use, abuse, or dependence are concerns for people with mental disorders due to their association with poor clinical and social outcomes such as high rates of suicide, HIV, homelessness, aggression, and incarceration. Therefore, comorbid substance use places additional burden on patients, families, psychiatric services, and government resources due to high rates of treatment non-adherence and relapse.

Tobacco smoking is also very common and poses considerable health risks, potential interference with the metabolism of psychotropic medications, and financial burden. Heavy cigarette use may contribute to the increased mortality and reduced life expectancy reported within the mental illness population.

What is the evidence for substance use in people with PTSD?

Moderate to high quality evidence finds a medium-sized increased rate of current smoking in people with PTSD, with the effect largest in males aged 20-30 years. Higher rates of drug and alcohol misuse were found in people with high-level PTSD symptoms compared to people with low-level PTSD symptoms.

In prisoners with PTSD, there was a small to medium-sized increased rate of substance use disorders when compared to prisoners without PTSD. Rates were highest in male prisoners, in adult prisoners, and in prisoners with any lifetime rather than current PTSD diagnosis.

For more information see the technical table



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