



965 SHOREPOINT COURT, #305 • ALAMEDA, CA 94501
PHONE 203-936-9642 • EMAIL INFO@VETERANSYOGAPROJECT.ORG

Veterans and PTSD Fact Sheet

What is PTSD?

Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is an anxiety disorder that can occur following the experience or witnessing of a traumatic event. The most common symptoms of PTSD include: intrusive memories and images of the traumatic event, nightmares, isolation, feeling tense or “on edge”, difficulty concentrating, feelings of detachment, hypervigilance, exaggerated startle response, and sleep disturbances.¹

Veterans and PTSD

According to the National Center for PTSD the number of veterans with PTSD varies by service era.

Operations Iraqi Freedom (OIF) and Enduring Freedom (OEF)

About 11-20 out of every 100 Veterans (or between 11-20%) who served in OIF or OEF have PTSD in a given year. This equals ~500k out of 2.8 million vets.²

Among OEF/OIF Veterans

- 50% of those with PTSD do not seek treatment (RAND)
- Out of the 50% that seek treatment, only half of them get "minimally adequate" treatment (RAND)
- 19% of veterans may have traumatic brain injury (RAND)

Gulf War (Desert Storm)

About 12 out of every 100 Gulf War Veterans (or 12%) have PTSD in a given year. This equals ~80k out of 650,000 vets.³

Vietnam War

About 15 out of every 100 Vietnam Veterans (or 15%) were currently diagnosed with PTSD at the time of the most recent study in the late 1980s, the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study (NVVRS). It is estimated that about 30 out of every 100 (or 30%) of Vietnam Veterans have had PTSD in their lifetimes. This equals ~420k out of 2.6 million Vietnam veterans.⁴

Collectively, over 1 million American veterans from these military conflicts are suffering from PTSD. This does not include veterans with PTSD who participated in the dozen or so other official military conflicts that the American military has engaged in since WWII.

Veterans and Suicide

According to the 2012 Dept. of Veteran Affairs suicide data report⁵, an estimated 22 Veterans will have died from suicide each day in the calendar year. Veterans are killing themselves because of depression and other mental health problems coupled with difficult life circumstances.



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Women Veterans

- Women veterans account for 10% of the veteran population.
- 20% of women veterans of OEF/OIF have been diagnosed with PTSD⁶
- Women have similar rates of PTSD as men (19% in OEF/OIF; 27% lifetime prevalence in Vietnam era Vets), but higher rates of depression.⁷
- Women are exposed to the same stressors as their male counterparts, but must also deal with unique challenges.
 - They also must contend with lower support from peers and superiors⁸
 - They are much more likely to be victims of Military Sexual Trauma⁹
 - 9% of women report unwanted sexual coercion; 7% report unwanted sexual contact.¹⁰
 - Women veterans commit suicide at rates 12X their civilian counterparts.¹¹

Yoga as a Complementary Therapy for Veterans with PTSD

Although there has been relatively little research examining the use of yoga in veterans with PTSD, the studies that have been conducted point to the effectiveness of these practices:

Mitchell, K.S., Dick, A.M., DiMartino, D.M., Smith, B.N., Niles, B., Koenen, K.C., & Street, A. (2014). A pilot study of a randomized controlled trial of yoga for PTSD symptoms in women. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 27, 121-128. PILOTS ID: 42064

Bormann, J. E., Thorp, S. R., Wetherell, J. L., Golshan, S., & Lang, A. J. (2013). Meditation-based mantram intervention for veterans with posttraumatic stress disorder: a randomized trial. *Psychological Trauma: Theory, Research, Practice, and Policy*, 5(3), 259.

Staples, J. K., Hamilton, M. F., & Uddo, M. (2013). A yoga program for the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans. *Military Medicine*, 178(8), 854-860.

Stankovic, L. (2011). Transforming trauma: a qualitative feasibility study of integrative restoration (iRest) yoga Nidra on combat-related post-traumatic stress disorder. *International Journal of Yoga Therapy*, 21(1), 23-37.

Martin, A. (2013). Multi-component yoga breath program for Vietnam veteran post-traumatic stress disorder: randomized controlled trial. *Journal of Traumatic Stress Disorders & Treatment*.

Stoller, C. C., Greuel, J. H., Cimini, L. S., Fowler, M. S., & Koomar, J. A. (2012). Effects of sensory-enhanced yoga on symptoms of combat stress in deployed military personnel. *American Journal of Occupational Therapy*, 66(1), 59-68.

Kashdan, T. B., Uswatte, G., & Julian, T. (2006). Gratitude and hedonic and eudemonic well-being in Vietnam war veterans. *Behaviour Research and Therapy*, 44(2), 177-199.



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Footnotes

- ¹American Psychiatric Association. (2013). *DSM 5*. American Psychiatric Association
- ²Kulka, R.A., Schlenger, W.A., Fairbanks, J.A., Hough, R.L., Jordan, B.K., Marmar, C.R., ... Cranston, A.S. (1990). *Trauma and the Vietnam War generation: Report of findings from the National Vietnam Veterans Readjustment Study*. New York: Brunner/Mazel.
- ³Kang, H.K., Natelson, B.H., Mahan, C.M., Lee, K.Y., & Murphy, F.M. (2003). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome-like illness among Gulf War Veterans: A population-based survey of 30,000 Veterans. *American Journal of Epidemiology*, 157(2):141-148.
- ⁴Tanielian, T. & Jaycox, L. (Eds.). (2008). *Invisible Wounds of War: Psychological and Cognitive Injuries, Their Consequences, and Services to Assist Recovery*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation.
- ⁵Kemp, J., & Bossarte, R. (2013). *Suicide data report: 2012*. Washington, DC: Department of Veterans Affairs, Mental Health Services, Suicide Prevention Program.
- ⁶United States Government Accountability Office. (July 16, 2009). *VA Health Care: Preliminary Findings on VA's Provision of Health Care Services to Women Veterans*. Accessed at:www.gao.gov/new.items/d09899t.pdf (PDF)
- ⁷Maguen, S., Ren, L., Bosch, J. O., Marmar, C. R., & Seal, K. H. (2010). Gender differences in mental health diagnoses among Iraq and Afghanistan veterans enrolled in veterans' affairs health care. *American Journal of Public Health*, 100(12), 2450-2456.
- United States Government Accountability Office. (July 16, 2009). *VA Health Care: Preliminary Findings on VA's Provision of Health Care Services to Women Veterans*. Accessed at:www.gao.gov/new.items/d09899t.pdf (PDF)
- ⁸Vogt, D., Pless, A. R, King, L. A., & King, D. W. (2005). Deployment Stressors, gender, and mental health outcomes among Gulf War I veterans. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 18, 272-284.
- ⁹(Carlson, B. E., Stromwall, L. K., & Lietz, C. A. (2013). Mental health issues in recently returning women veterans: Implications for practice. *Social work*, swt001.
- ¹⁰Murdoch, M., Bradley, A., Mather, S. H., Klein, R. E., Turner, C. L., & Yano, E. M. (2006). Women and war. *Journal of General Internal Medicine*, 21(S3), S5-S10.
- ¹¹Kang, H. K., Bullman, T. A., Smolenski, D. J., Skopp, N. A., Gahm, G. A., & Reger, M. A. (2015). Suicide risk among 1.3 million veterans who were on active duty during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. *Annals of epidemiology*, 25(2), 96-100.