Recommended Medications for the Treatment of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder

The military health care system offers highly effective treatments for PTSD. **Individual trauma-focused psychotherapy is the recommended first-line treatment,** but if psychotherapy is not available or if you think psychotherapy is not right for you at this time, then medication alone might be helpful.

The four most effective medications for the treatment of PTSD are listed below:

Generic Name	Brand Name	What You Need to Know
sertraline	Zoloft®	▪ Common side effects of taking SSRIs and SNRIs include upset stomach, sweating, headache, and dizziness. Some people have sexual side effects such as decreased desire to have sex or difficulty having an orgasm. Some side effects are short-term, although others may last as long as you take the medication ▪ Venlafaxine can elevate blood pressure; caution is advised if you have hypertension
paroxetine	Paxil®	
fluoxetine	Prozac®	
venlafaxine	Effexor®	

CAUTION

Benzodiazepines (such as Xanax®, Ativan® and Klonopin®) are not recommended because there is little evidence of effectiveness and they may delay or interfere with recovery from PTSD.

CAUTION

Marijuana is not recommended for treating PTSD due to lack of evidence, known adverse effects, and associated risks.

No one treatment is right for everyone. Consult your provider about other medications and treatment options to determine which treatment is best for you based on the benefits, risks, and side effects of each treatment.

CAUTION

Alcohol use in excess is discouraged due to potential risks including: worsening mental health condition, interference with medication or other treatments, increased health risks, and increased risk of impulsive behavior.

CAUTION

It is not uncommon for individuals struggling with PTSD to self-medicate with alcohol or other substances. Rates of problematic drinking range from 12%–48% among Veterans with PTSD. If your alcohol consumption has become problematic, consult your primary care or mental health provider.

A diagnosis of PTSD does not automatically disqualify you for military service. A medical evaluation board may be indicated if you have persistent duty limitations. You and your provider will determine the best way forward.

Department of Veterans Affairs and Department of Defense (DoD) employees who use this information are responsible for considering all applicable regulations and policies throughout the course of care.

Resources

Primary Care Provider
Your primary care provider is a good source for information

Chaplain
Chaplains provide confidential support

National Center for Posttraumatic Stress Disorder
www.ptsd.va.gov

Real Warriors
www.realwarriors.net

Military OneSource
800-342-9647
www.militaryonesource.mil

Psychological Health Center of Excellence
www.pdhealth.mil

TRICARE
Except for active duty members, who should see their primary care manager, TRICARE beneficiaries (family members and retirees) can receive outpatient care from a Network mental health provider without a referral. Please visit www.tricare.mil and click on "Find a provider" for a list of Network mental health providers in your area

If you have an emergency or are in crisis, please call 911 or contact

Military Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Mobile Apps

PTSD Coach
Provides education on PTSD that can be used alone or with psychological treatment
mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-coach

PTSD Family Coach
Provides support for family members of those with PTSD
mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-family-coach

Breathe2Relax
Provides diaphragm breathing exercises
health.mil/mhealth

Virtual Hope Box
Helps reduce stress and builds coping skills
health.mil/mhealth

Dream EZ
Helps the user rewrite nightmares into less disturbing dreams
health.mil/mhealth

Military Meditation Coach
A podcast to help you strengthen your mind with mindfulness and relaxation exercises
health.mil/podcasts

Reference

[1] The Management of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder Work Group, Department of Veterans Affairs & Department of Defense. (2017). VA/DoD Clinical Practice Guideline for the Management of Posttraumatic Stress Disorder and Acute Stress Disorder. Retrieved from https://www.healthquality.va.gov/guidelines/MH/ptsd/VADoDPTSDCPGFinal.pdf

VA/DoD Evidence-Based Practice

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