

WHAT CAN I DO TO FEEL BETTER?

“Feeling better” means different things to each of us. It may mean that your symptoms go away all together, it may mean that they are less intense and easier to handle, or it may mean that you are growing in your ability to accept your new limitations.

If you are experiencing feeling nervous, sad, or traumatized or if you are struggling to cope with daily life since leaving the hospital, there are things you can do to feel better such as:

- (1) Get physically active—even if you are *very* limited, physical activity helps improve mood.
- (2) Connect with others—socializing with others decreases stress, helps broaden your perspective on things, and helps you to feel like you are part of a community.
- (3) Meet with a mental health provider who can offer “talk therapy” such as cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT), exposure treatment, or a combination approach.
- (4) Your mental health provider may also recommend a medication, such as an antidepressant (SSRI or SNRI), which can help with depression, anxiety and PTSD.

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ANXIETY, DEPRESSION AND PTSD

National Institute on Mental Health

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/anxiety-disorders/index.shtml>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/depression/index.shtml>

<https://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/index.shtml>

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ARDS

<https://medlineplus.gov/ency/article/000103.htm>

<http://www.lung.org/lung-health-and-diseases/lung-disease-lookup/ards/symptoms-causes-risk-factors.html?referrer=https://www.google.com/>

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT POST-INTENSIVE CARE SYNDROME (PICS)

<http://www.myicucare.org/Thrive/Pages/Post-intensive-Care-Syndrome.aspx>

FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT OUTCOMES AFTER CRITICAL ILLNESS

http://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/pulmonary/research/Outcomes_after_critical_illness_surgery/

AFTER THE ICU:

PATIENT AND FAMILY GUIDE TO MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES



ARDS FOUNDATION

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WHAT IS ARDS?

- A life threatening condition when fluid develops in the tiny air sacs of the lungs
- ~200,000 people in the U.S. get ARDS every year and nearly 100,000 die
- Survivors often develop mental health problems
- Survivors rarely are referred for treatment

WHAT ARE SOME COMMON MENTAL HEALTH OUTCOMES AFTER ARDS?

- (1) General Anxiety
- (2) Depressive symptoms (Depression)
- (3) Posttraumatic Stress (PTSD)

WHAT IS GENERAL ANXIETY?

Anxiety can include feelings of fear, dread, uncertainty and lack of control. Anxiety can feel like tension or restlessness and can affect thoughts, emotions and behaviors. If left untreated, anxiety can become worse and can affect physical, emotional, and interpersonal function.

WHY IS ANXIETY A PROBLEM?

Anxiety can lead to social isolation and if untreated, it can often grow and cause you to be less involved than you want to be in key aspects of your life. Anxiety can impact relationships, work, recreation, and the overall quality of your life.

HOW DO I KNOW IF I AM DEPRESSED?

It is very normal to be sad from time to time, especially after having ARDS. But, if you experience the following symptoms for at least 2 weeks, and they affect your ability to engage in or enjoy your usual activities, then you may be “clinically” depressed:

- Feeling sad, irritable, or “short” with others
- Decreased interest or pleasure in enjoyable activities
- Changes in appetite or weight loss or weight gain
- Changes in sleep (problems sleeping/sleeping too much)
- Fatigue or loss of energy
- Feelings of worthlessness, hopelessness, or inappropriate guilt
- Difficulty thinking or concentrating or indecisiveness



WHAT IS PTSD AND HOW CAN IT DEVELOP AFTER BEING IN THE ICU?

Being in the ICU with ARDS is life threatening and can feel scary and disorienting. PTSD is a mental health problem that develops after experiencing or witnessing a life-threatening event.

ICU-related PTSD is unique from PTSD after combat or assault in that *avoidance* and *future-oriented worries* tend to be the most common symptoms.

Individuals with ICU-related PTSD tend to avoid seeking help, they tend to deny medical/physical difficulties, and they resist talking about these difficulties to a medical provider for fear that it may result in another ICU hospitalization. They also tend to worry about medical condition recurrence.

In addition to avoidance and future-oriented worries, other common signs of PTSD include:

- Flashbacks
- Nightmares or bad dreams
- Frightening thoughts
- Feeling tense or “on edge”
- Difficulty sleeping
- Distorted feelings about oneself or the world
- Reactivity