

Live Life to the Fullest

### Child Traumatic Stress

When a child feels intensely threatened by an event he or she is involved in or witnesses, we call that event trauma. Child Traumatic Stress (CTS) is a psychological reaction that some children have to a traumatic experience.



Children who suffer from CTS have developed reactions to trauma that linger and affect their daily lives long after the traumatic event has ended.

Not every child experiences CTS after a trauma. All children are different, and many are able to adapt to and overcome difficult events. But one out of every four children will experience a traumatic event before the age of 16, and some will develop CTS.

If left untreated, CTS can interfere with healthy development and lead to long-term difficulties with school, relationships, jobs, and the ability to participate fully in a healthy life.

Fortunately, there are proven and effective treatments for CTS.



#### Five Convenient Locations in Aurora

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>1. Viewpoint Plaza Center</b><br>11059 E. Bethany Drive<br>Aurora, CO 80014 | <b>4. Alameda Center</b><br>10782 E. Alameda Avenue<br>Aurora, CO 80014 |
| <b>2. North Aurora Center</b><br>1646 Elmira Street<br>Aurora, CO 80010        | <b>5. Intercept Center</b><br>16905 E. 2nd Avenue<br>Aurora, CO 80011   |
| <b>3. Hampden Center</b><br>14301 E. Hampden Avenue<br>Aurora, CO 80014        |   |

For more information about any of our programs or services, please call our main number:

**303.617.2300**



**Aurora Mental Health  
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## Children and Traumatic Stress



**Aurora  
Mental Health  
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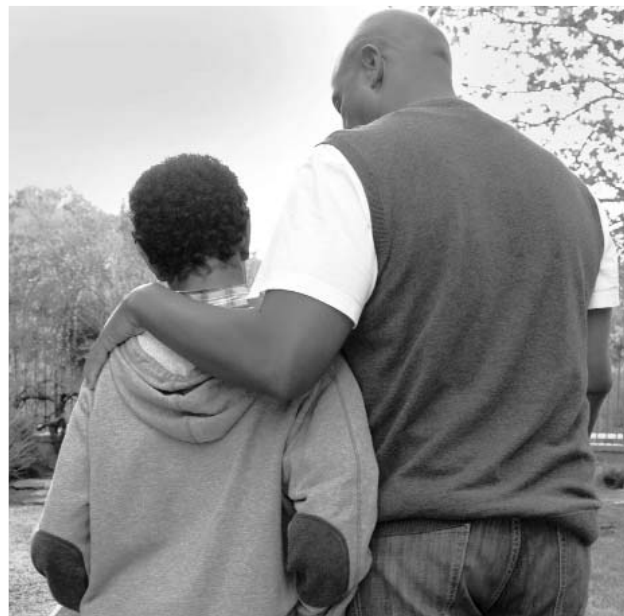


## What you need to know

We live with dangers every day. They can become traumatic when they threaten serious injury or death or when they include physical or sexual violation. When we experience trauma, we feel terror, helplessness or horror.

### Examples of trauma include:

- ▲ Automobile accidents
- ▲ Serious injuries
- ▲ Acts of violence
- ▲ Physical or sexual abuse
- ▲ Medical procedures
- ▲ The unexpected death of a loved one
- ▲ Life-threatening natural disasters



### Children who suffer from Child Traumatic Stress (CTS) may experience:

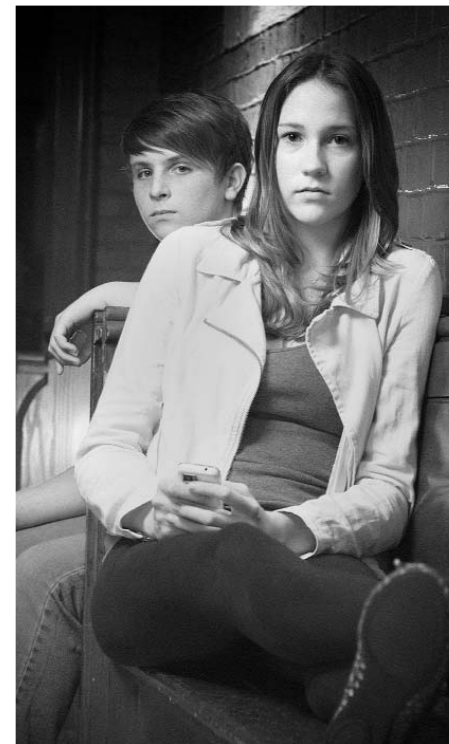
- ▲ Intense and ongoing emotional upset
- ▲ Depression
- ▲ Anxiety
- ▲ Behavioral changes or regression
- ▲ Difficulties at school
- ▲ Problems with relationships
- ▲ Difficulty with eating and/or sleeping
- ▲ Aches and pains
- ▲ Withdrawal
- ▲ Substance abuse, dangerous behaviors, or unhealthy sexual activity among older children

### Responding to traumas

For reasons that are basic to survival, traumatic experiences may continue to take priority in the thoughts, emotions and behavior of children, adolescents and adults long after the trauma is over.

### There are three core groups of post-traumatic stress reactions:

1. Continuing upsetting images and/or thoughts of the trauma; nightmares; strong physical and emotional reaction to stress reminders; difficulty distinguishing new, safer situations from the traumatic situation; over-reaction.
2. Avoidance of any situation, person, or place that reminds them of what happened; "forgetting" some of the worst parts of the experience while continuing to react to reminders.
3. Bodies that stay "on alert" causing difficulty sleeping, irritability, quick anger, a more exaggerated startle response, difficulty concentrating, and recurring physical symptoms like headaches or stomachaches.



### Recovering from Traumatic Stress

If a child you know has experienced any of the symptoms or signs of ongoing difficulties following a traumatic experience, it's important to seek help for them. Entering treatment can have concrete beneficial results, while foregoing help can have long-lasting detrimental consequences.

Cognitive behavioral therapies have been proven effective in helping children with CTS. These therapies will involve parents or caregivers, and generally include the following:

- ▲ Teaching children stress management and relaxation skills
- ▲ Creating a coherent narrative or story of what happened
- ▲ Correcting untrue or distorted ideas about what happened and why
- ▲ Changing unhealthy and wrong views that have resulted from the trauma
- ▲ Involving parents or caregivers in creating optimal recovery environments



Aurora Mental Health Center can provide the help you and your child need. Service is available throughout Aurora.

Visit us at [www.aumhc.org](http://www.aumhc.org) or call 303.617.2300 for additional information about our programs and services.

