

Advice for patients being discharged following a major incident

Emergency Department

This leaflet describes common emotional reactions that people may experience after being involved in or witnessing an extraordinary event like a major incident (such as a large scale accident, crash or exposure to hazardous material, explosion or bomb blast). If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Emotional reactions

You may notice:

- Feeling tearful or upset
- Feeling anxious, on edge or jumpy
- Feeling irritable or angry
- Poor sleep or loss of appetite
- Having poor concentration
- Having thoughts, memories or 'pictures' about what happened come into your mind
- Having dreams about what happened or nightmares
- Feeling disoriented or that things do not feel real
- Feeling emotionally numb
- Not wanting to talk about what happened.

These reactions are common. They tend to settle down naturally in the days and weeks following the event. They tend to become less frequent and less distressing over time. These reactions are not a sign that you are losing control or not coping. They are part of the adjustment process.

What can I do?

Look after yourself:

- Remind yourself that what you are feeling is common.
- Remind yourself that it can take some time for thoughts and feelings to settle down.
- If you know what kind of support you want from friends or family then let them know.
- Try to keep to your usual routine, including eating regular meals and keeping a regular time that you get up and go to bed.
- Avoid using alcohol or non-prescription drugs to manage your mood.
- Watch your intake of caffeinated drinks; caffeine can mimic sensations of anxiety and can affect sleep.
- Talk about your feelings and what happened in your own time.
- Speak to your local faith leader if you want religious or spiritual support.
- Speak to your GP if you have questions or concerns about how you are feeling.

What next?

If after one month you are bothered by any of the above reactions or by changes to your mood that are getting in the way of everyday life then please speak to your GP. Your GP will be able to refer you locally for a short course of talking therapy.

Useful sources of information

NHS England

Help and support after a traumatic event

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/london/our-work/help-and-support/>

Royal College of Psychiatrists

Post-traumatic stress disorder

<https://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/healthadvice/problemsanddisorders/posttraumaticstressdisorder.aspx>

NHS Choices

Stress, anxiety and depression

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/post-traumatic-stress-disorder-ptsd/treatment/>

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing (near the lift foyer).

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

Web: www.nhs.uk

NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

Tel: 111

