

# Symptoms of PTSD in Children

## Birth–3

- difficulty falling asleep
- nightmares
- highly emotional response to triggers
- easily startled
- excessive fussiness, crying and screaming
- temper tantrums
- severe separation anxiety
- aggressive behaviors
- poor appetite
- low weight
- digestive problems such as vomiting and reflux
- withdrawn
- avoidance of anyone or anything associated with trauma
- excessive sadness
- little emotion
- regressive behaviors such as thumb sucking or return to bottle
- attention-seeking behaviors
- verbal skills that lag behind the norm or regress

## Ages 3 to 6

- nightmares
- difficulty staying asleep
- poor sleep habits
- repetitive play that recreates and narrates trauma
- poor focus at school
- daydreaming
- constantly on high alert
- acting out in social situations
- excessive temper
- aggressive behavior
- verbally abusive
- complaints about stomachaches and headaches
- crying and screaming
- easily startled
- separation anxiety
- avoidance of anything and anyone related to original trauma
- high anxiety
- withdrawn
- irritable
- sad beyond their years
- asking questions about death
- regressive behaviors such as baby talk and bed wetting

## Ages 7–12

- nightmares
- difficulty falling or staying asleep
- reenacting trauma experience repetitively
- narrating trauma experience repetitively
- difficulty concentrating
- changes in school performance or behavior
- easily startled
- complaints about stomachaches and headaches
- high anxiety
- fear about personal safety or the safety of family members and friends
- separation anxiety
- expressions of guilt or shame at having caused traumatic event
- avoiding places or people that remind them of the original trauma
- emotional numbness
- hoarding food
- eating too much or too little
- sleeping too much or too little
- regressive behaviors such as bed wetting or soiling

## Ages 13–18

- flashbacks
- nightmares
- sleep disturbances
- compulsion to talk about details of traumatic event
- poor school performance
- poor job performance
- impulsivity
- poor money management
- risky sexual behaviors
- impending sense of doom
- avoiding places or people that remind them of the original trauma
- alcohol or drug abuse
- eating disorders
- self-harming and numbing behaviors
- denial of emotions about the original event
- inability to talk about or recognize their emotions
- foreshortened sense of the future