



Veterans Affairs  
Canada

Anciens Combattants  
Canada

## What is an Operational Stress Injury?

An operational stress injury (OSI) is any persistent psychological difficulty resulting from operational duties performed while serving in the Canadian Forces (CF) or as a member of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP). It is used to describe a broad range of problems which include diagnosed medical conditions such as anxiety disorders, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) as well as other conditions that may be less severe, but still interfere with daily functioning.

The symptoms and the injuries themselves vary according to the individual and nature of their experience. For Veterans, the injury may occur following combat duties, after serving in a war zone, in peacekeeping missions or following other traumatic or serious events not tied to combat.

It is normal to experience some form of distress after being exposed to a traumatic event. Fortunately, help is available for those struggling with an OSI. The earlier help is sought, the better the rate of recovery.

THE NEW  
**VETERANS**  
CHARTER  
For CF Veterans and their Families



**Deer Lodge  
Operational Stress Injury  
Clinic**

Canada 

## What is a Traumatic Event?

“Trauma” is different for everyone, but there are a number of events that can cause significant distress. These include, but are not limited to:

- threat of death;
- serious injury;
- viewing or handling of bodies;
- death or serious injury of a close friend, colleague or family member;
- exposure to a potentially contagious disease or toxic agent; and
- an action or inaction resulting in serious injury or death for others.

## What are Common Reactions?

Most people experience strong reactions after traumatic events which may include:

- feelings of panic or anxiety;
- a desire to avoid anything attached to the event;
- feeling sad, tearful, hopeless, depressed, angry and/or guilty;
- increased consumption of alcohol or abuse of other substances;
- a change in personality;
- difficulties concentrating, disorientation and/or memory problems;
- sleep disturbances or excessive alertness;
- being easily startled;
- trouble controlling moods;
- difficulties with relationships;
- painfully reliving the event (while awake or asleep); and
- intrusive thoughts about the event.

Often these reactions resolve themselves or go away soon after the event. However, at times they may continue.

## What Should I Do if My Symptoms Persist?

Seek help as soon as possible if you are experiencing any symptoms of distress which are affecting your ability to work or function socially.

## National Network of Operational Stress Injury Clinics

Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) has OSI Clinics to help Veterans, CF members, and eligible RCMP recovering from an OSI. Support is also available for their families.

The OSI clinics have teams of mental health professionals, including psychiatrists, psychologists, nurses and clinical social workers, who provide high quality standardized assessment, treatment, prevention and support services.

## To Seek Help and Access Services

- Veterans and their families can contact VAC at **1-866-522-2122**.
- Still-serving Canadian Forces members can contact their Base Medical Officer.
- RCMP personnel can contact an RCMP medical doctor for a referral to an OSI Clinic.



## **Need to Know More?**

To learn more about the services and benefits now available through VAC please call toll-free **1-866-522-2122**.

You can also visit the VAC Web site at **<https://www.veterans.gc.ca/>** or e-mail us at **[information@veterans.gc.ca](mailto:information@veterans.gc.ca)**

This publication is available upon request in multiple formats.

© Copyright Her Majesty the Queen in Right of Canada, represented by the Minister of Veterans Affairs, 2006.

Cat. No.: V32-119/2006  
ISBN: 0-662-49030-4

Printed in Canada

