

Critical Care And PTSD

Many invasive aspects of intensive care are necessary to help you survive immediate danger, but can also contribute to the later development of PTSD. Learning about what happened during intensive care, and why these things were done, can help you understand and recover from your experiences.



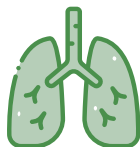
Medical interventions

Medical interventions might be frightening, uncomfortable, painful, or all three.



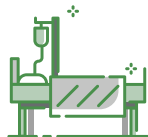
Delirium

Delirium is a severe state of confusion. People with delirium cannot think clearly, have difficulty understanding what is going on around them, and may see or hear things that are not there.



Mechanical ventilation

Being fitted with a breathing tube means that you cannot communicate, can leave you feeling powerless, and puts you at greater risk of becoming delirious.



Environmental factors, such as lighting or the noise of machines

This can leave you feeling disoriented or unable to sleep.



Awareness of your life being in danger

Your 'threat system' being active leads to normal feelings of fear or terror.



Hallucinations, unusual beliefs, and dreams

Patients in critical care often have frightening experiences of feeling persecuted, such as seeing things which are not real. These are your mind's attempts at making sense of what is happening to you.



Restraint

Patients in ICU are occasionally restrained with safety mitts or soft bandages in order to prevent them from removing tubes or equipment. It can leave you feeling powerless and out of control.



Isolation

Lack of contact with your loved ones can leave you feeling alone and isolated.



Prolonged duration

Some traumatic experiences are over in minutes, but your stay in intensive care might last days or weeks, giving you a bigger 'dose' of trauma.



Sedation affecting consciousness

It is disorienting to drift in and out of consciousness. Sedative medication can lead to delirium.



Sleep deprivation

Sleep deprivation is a leading cause of distressing psychological symptoms.



Healthcare staff wearing PPE equipment

We are programmed to find kind faces reassuring. A combination of feeling semi-conscious and seeing masked faces can contribute to paranoia.