

Part 1

Trauma-Informed Care

As healthcare providers, we want to provide safe environments for our patients, which requires us to be aware of what trauma is, how its exposure can have lasting effects on the individual experiencing it, and how it can inform the palliative care we provide.

What is Trauma?¹

Trauma is an emotional response caused by distressing experiences that overwhelm an individual's ability to cope. Trauma can be classified under five main types:

1. Single Incident

An unexpected and overwhelming event (e.g., single episode of abuse, sudden loss, natural disaster)

2. Complex or Repetitive

Related to ongoing abuse or betrayal and often involves being trapped physically and/or emotionally

3. Developmental

Early exposure to ongoing repetitive trauma as infants or children, that interferes with healthy development and attachment (e.g., abandonment, neglect, physical abuse, or assault)

4. Historical

Immense group trauma (e.g., residential schools, slavery, war)

5. Intergenerational

Psychological or emotional effects experienced by individuals who live with trauma survivors. Adaptation and coping patterns developed in response to trauma can be passed from one generation to the next. This is also a form of historical trauma

Trauma is common:

Over 70% of Canadian adults report some form of trauma exposure in their lifetime with approximately 8% of these adults later developing Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder²

The Effects of Trauma^{1,3}

People may experience changes in their life, as a result of their trauma, including physical changes (e.g., chronic pain, stress-related conditions), mood and behaviour alterations (e.g., anxiety, anger, self-harm, avoidance), spiritual disconnection (e.g., loss of meaning, feelings of shame and guilt), and interpersonal conflicts (e.g., lack of trust, difficulty with boundaries). Trauma can have a great impact on a person's life, especially if they have experienced multiple types of traumas or have had prolonged exposure to trauma. Understanding trauma can help us as healthcare providers to broaden our scope of knowledge and further build on our professional relationships with patients with whom we interact.

For more information surrounding trauma and its effects, please visit: [Trauma - Common Questions | CAM⁴](#)

Resources:

1. Arthur et al. (2013). Trauma-informed practice guide. Published by the BC Provincial Mental Health and Substance Use Planning Council
2. [Traumatic Stress Section: Facts About Traumatic Stress and PTSD - Canadian Psychological Association \(cpa.ca\)](#)
3. [Trauma and violence-informed approaches to policy and practice - Canada.ca](#)
4. [Trauma - Common Questions | CAMH](#)