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## Study: 9/11 Stress Declined Fast

By Margaret Ramirez  
Staff Writer

September 10, 2003, 8:16 PM EDT

The number of New Yorkers suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder declined dramatically in the six months after the Sept. 11 attack, but researchers predict other mental health issues could persist, according to a study released Wednesday.

The study by epidemiologists at the New York Academy of Medicine in Manhattan found that the percentage of Manhattan residents with symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder dropped from 7.5 percent one month after Sept. 11 to 0.6 percent after six months.

The report, which was published Wednesday in the American Journal of Epidemiology, suggests a rapid resolution of most of the traumatic symptoms experienced by New Yorkers after the tragedy. Researchers said the findings are the first to document the changing levels of trauma since Sept. 11, 2001.

"There was a high burden of symptoms up front, but this study suggests tremendous resilience among New Yorkers and rapid resolution of many symptoms," said Dr. Sandro Galea, an epidemiologist at the academy's Center for Urban Epidemiological Studies and the lead author of the report.

Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder include nightmares, flashbacks, intrusive memories, startled reactions to loud noises, difficulty concentrating and efforts to avoid reminders of the traumatic experience. The condition is usually diagnosed if symptoms persist for a month after the event.

Galea said that even though many residents are no longer suffering from full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder related to Sept. 11, other mental health issues may persist.

While more than two-thirds of the cases of probable post-traumatic stress related to Sept. 11 were resolved by March 2002, about 5.3 percent of city residents were still experiencing "subsyndromal" stress.

People with this condition keep reliving the event, and either find themselves avoiding memories of that day or are unusually jumpy or easily startled.

For the study, researchers interviewed a total of nearly 6,000 New Yorkers by

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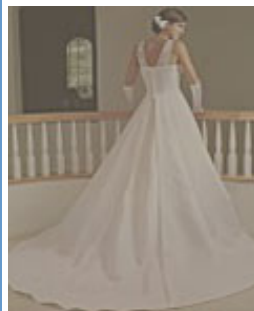
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telephone one, four and six months after the attack.

Across the city, only 1.5 percent of residents — or 91,000 people — experienced post-traumatic stress six months after the attack. Post-traumatic stress was consistently higher among those who were directly affected by the attack, including those who were in the trade center when the planes struck and those who lost friends or relatives.



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