



Traumatic Brain Injury



Traumatic brain injury (TBI) is an alteration of the normal functioning of the brain. A mild traumatic brain injury, also known as a concussion, can be caused by a blow to the head, a blast, a fall, an object penetrating the skull, or the brain moving back and forth forcefully in the skull.

According to the Center for Disease Control (CDC), TBI is a serious public health problem that affects approximately 1.7 million Americans every year, with an estimated 5.3 million Americans living with a TBI related disability. For the active duty, blasts are the most common cause of concussion. In the non-deployment setting and the civilian population, risk factors for developing a concussion may include the following: involvement in motor vehicle accidents, falls, high impact sports, recreational activities and physical abuse.

Symptoms of TBI vary depending on the parts of the brain injured and the severity of the injury, and not all individuals will exhibit all symptoms. Some signs and symptoms may materialize soon after a trauma, while others can develop over time. Symptoms of TBI may include the following: headache, behavior changes, anxiety, irritability, risk taking behavior or problems with memory, vision, judgment, balance and sleep.

Tips	Strategies
Most people recover fully from a TBI, but the recovery time varies from person to person. While you are recovering, coping strategies can help deal with the symptoms of TBI	Ensure you allow time for your brain to heal by getting plenty of rest; pace yourself and take breaks when needed; write things down to help you remember; follow a routine and schedule; focus your attention on one thing at a time; and consult with a trusted family member or friend prior to making important decisions.
Understand that mood changes are normal and okay	If you begin to feel anxious, irritated, overwhelmed or sad try taking deep breaths, doing something you enjoy, removing yourself from the stressful situation, staying positive, avoiding negative self-talk and thoughts, and talking to someone you trust.
Practice behaviors that can promote healing and speed recovery	Get a sufficient amount of rest and sleep, avoid alcohol and tobacco, take medications as directed by your physician and avoid contact sports.
Learn more about TBI	Talk to a healthcare provider or use the resources in this document to learn how TBI affects behavior to help avoid misunderstanding or misinterpreting new behaviors.

If you have thoughts of hurting yourself or others, seek emergency care immediately. Go to the closest emergency room or call the Military Crisis Hotline at 1-800-273-TALK (8255).



Resources

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC)

DVBIC's mission is to serve active duty military, their beneficiaries, and veterans with traumatic brain injuries through state-of-the-art clinical care, innovative clinical research initiatives and educational programs, and support for force health protection services. DVBIC fulfills this mission through ongoing collaboration with the DoD, military services, Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), civilian health partners, local communities, families and individuals with TBI.

<http://www.dvbic.org>

BrainLine Military

BrainLine Military provides military-specific information and resources on traumatic brain injury (TBI) for service members (active duty and reserves), veterans and families including articles and videos about how to effectively talk and communicate with someone who has experienced a TBI.

<http://www.brainlinemilitary.org/>

The Brain Injury Association of America

The Brain Injury Association of America's Website provides information on the latest brain injury care strategies, research findings and advocacy initiatives. The site is geared towards individuals who have sustained brain injuries, caregivers, clinicians, researchers, professionals, advocates and the general public.

<http://www.biausa.org>

Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center (MSKTC)

MSKTC is a national center that works to put research into practice to serve the needs of people with spinal cord injuries (SCI), traumatic brain injuries (TBI), and burn injuries. Included in their numerous resources are fact sheets regarding sexuality after a TBI.

<http://www.msktc.org/>