

What is a traumatic brain injury?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a blow or jolt to the head or a penetrating head injury that disrupts the function of the brain. Not all blows or jolts to the head result in a TBI.

The severity of such an injury may range from "mild" (a brief change in mental status or consciousness) to "severe" (an extended period of unconsciousness or amnesia after the injury). A TBI can result in short or long-term problems.

What causes TBI? The leading causes of TBI are:

- Bullets, fragments, blasts
- Falls
- Motor vehicle-traffic crashes
- Assaults

Blasts are a leading cause of TBI for active duty military personnel in war zones.

Recovery from TBI:

- Get plenty of sleep at night and don't over exert yourself during the day.
- Return to normal activities gradually.
- Avoid any activities where a helmet is recommended for safety (i.e., boxing, cycling, roller blading, skating, etc.)
- Don't drink alcohol.
- If it's harder to remember things, write them down.
- If you are losing important items, put them in the same place all the time.
- Try doing only one thing at a time in a quiet, non-distracting environment.
- If you feel irritable, use relaxation techniques to help manage the situation.
- Be patient! Healing from a brain injury takes time.
- Keep your brain active by doing activities that require strategies and fine motor skills; such as:
 - crossword puzzles
 - playing a musical instrument
 - drawing
 - writing
 - painting
 - playing cards or board games

Symptoms of Mild TBI or Concussion

- >Headaches
- >Dizziness
- >Excessive fatigue (tiredness)
- >Concentration problems
- >Forgetting things
- >Irritability
- >Sleep problems
- >Balance problems
- >Ringing in the ears
- >Vision changes

REMEMBER:

Symptoms of mild TBI or concussion often resolve within hours to days and almost always improve in the first 1 - 3 months following injury.

However, if symptoms persist and are not improving, you should go to your primary care clinic for an evaluation.



Helpful Websites

Military Severely Injured Center | 1-888-774-1361 | www.militaryhomefront.dod.mil
Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center | 1-800-870-9244 | www.dvbic.org
Brain Injury Association of America | 1-800-444-6443 | www.biausa.org
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention | 1-800-311-3435 | www.cdc.gov