

Combat Trauma – Quick Facts

Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

If the head is hit or violently shaken, a "concussion" or "closed head injury" can result. Concussion is seldom life threatening, so doctors often use the term "mild" when the person is only dazed or confused or loses consciousness for a short time. However, concussion can result in serious symptoms. People who survive multiple concussions may have more serious problems. People who have had a concussion may say that they are "fine" although their behavior or personality has changed. If you notice such changes in a family member or friend, suggest they seek medical care.

Common Symptoms of Brain Injury	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty organizing daily tasks • Blurred vision or eyes tire easily • Headaches or ringing in the ears • Feeling sad, anxious or listless • Easily irritated or angered • Feeling tired all the time • Feeling light-headed or dizzy • Change in sleep – much more or less 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trouble with memory, attention or concentration • More sensitive to sounds, lights or distractions • Impaired decision making or problem solving • Difficulty inhibiting behavior – impulsive • Slowed thinking, moving speaking or reading • Easily confused, feeling easily overwhelmed • Change in sexual interest or behavior

Recovery Following TBI

Some symptoms may be present immediately; others may appear much later. People experience brain injuries differently. Speed of recovery varies. Most people with mild injuries recover fully, but it can take time. In general, recovery is slower in older persons. People with a previous brain injury may find that it takes longer to recover from their current injury. Some symptoms can last for days, weeks, or longer. Talk to your health care provider about any troubling symptoms or problems. For more information, go to www.pdhealth.mil.

To Promote Healing & Manage Symptoms	
<p>Things That Can Help</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get plenty of rest & sleep • Increase activity slowly • Carry a notebook – write things down if you have trouble remembering • Establish a regular daily routine to structure activities • Do only one thing at a time if you are easily distracted; turn off the TV or radio while you work • Check with someone you trust when making decisions 	<p>Things That Can Hurt</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid activities that could lead to another brain injury – examples include contact sports, motorcycles, skiing • Avoid alcohol as it may slow healing of the injury • Avoid caffeine or "energy-enhancing" products as they may increase symptoms • Avoid pseudo ephedrine-containing products as they may increase symptoms – check labels on cough, cold, and allergy medications • Avoid excessive use of over the counter sleeping aids – they can slow thinking and memory

If you or a loved one experiences distress associated with combat trauma, you should make an appointment with your primary care manager. If you need counseling or help locating services, please call Military One Source 24/7 at 1-800-342-9647.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)

PTSD is a condition that develops after someone has experienced a life-threatening situation, such as combat. In PTSD, the event must have involved actual or threatened death or serious injury and caused an emotional reaction involving intense fear, hopelessness, or horror. People with PTSD have three kinds of experiences for weeks or months after the event is over and the individual is in a safe environment.

<p>Re-experience the event over and over again</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You can't put it out of your mind no matter how hard you try You have repeated nightmares about the event You have vivid memories, almost like it was happening all over again You have a strong reaction when you encounter reminders, such as a car backfiring
<p>Avoid people, places, or even feelings that remind you of the event</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You work hard at putting it out of your mind You feel numb and detached so you don't have to feel anything You avoid people or places that remind you of the event
<p>Feel "keyed up" or on-edge all the time</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> You may startle easily You may be irritable or angry all the time for no apparent reason You are always looking around, hyper-vigilant of your surroundings You may have trouble relaxing or getting to sleep

People who have PTSD have experiences from all three of these categories that stay with them most of the time and interfere with their ability to live their life or do their job. If you still are not sure if this is a problem for you, you can take a quick self-assessment through the Mental Health Self Assessment Program at www.militarymentalhealth.org.

Most Service members do not develop PTSD. For those who do, it is important to keep in mind that about 50 percent of PTSD cases get better on their own within 3 months. It is also important to remember that you can experience some PTSD symptoms without having full-blown PTSD.

The good news: PTSD is treatable. You do not need to suffer from the symptoms of PTSD alone. Therapy has proven to be very effective in reducing and even eliminating the symptoms. Medication can also help. Early treatment leads to the best outcomes. So, if you think you or someone in your family may have PTSD, please seek treatment right away.