



VA/DoD CLINICAL PRACTICE GUIDELINE FOR THE MANAGEMENT AND REHABILITATION OF POST-ACUTE MILD TRAUMATIC BRAIN INJURY

Department of Veterans Affairs
Department of Defense

Patient Summary

I. What is concussion/mild traumatic brain injury?

A traumatic brain injury (TBI) is a head injury caused by a blow or jolt to the head that disrupts the normal function of the brain. TBI can be mild, moderate, or severe. A concussion, also known as a mild TBI (mTBI), is the most common type of TBI.

If you experienced a concussion, you will have had at least one of the following:([1](#), [2](#))

- Forgetting the events before or after the injury
- Confusion, disorientation, or slowed thinking right after the injury
- Loss of consciousness up to, but not longer than 30 minutes

II. What symptoms should I watch for?

You may have experienced one or more of the following symptoms in the days that followed the injury:

- Headache
- Unsteadiness
- Vision problems/blurring
- Disorientation/confusion
- Difficulty with concentration/attention
- Irritability/agitation

If any of the above symptoms change or worsen contact your health care provider immediately. If you develop new symptoms, such as seizures, vomiting, worsening vision, or slurred speech, go to the closest emergency room.

III. How is concussion/mTBI diagnosed?

Concussion is diagnosed by your health care provider based on the history and description of the injury, your symptoms, and other factors, including a physical exam. You should discuss any symptoms you may have with your provider to determine whether they are associated with your injury.

IV. How is concussion/mTBI treated?

Generally, patients make a full recovery from a concussion without treatment. Recovery is different for each patient, but symptoms usually improve within hours and resolve completely within a few days or weeks after injury. If you have symptoms that continue to impact your daily activities, you should talk to your provider about treatment options.

V. Additional Resources

Resource	Description and Link
TBI Center of Excellence	https://health.mil/About-MHS/OASDHA/Defense-Health-Agency/Research-and-Development/Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Center-of-Excellence
Current suicidal ideations with patient in provider’s office	Immediately phone mental health provider in your VA or engage the PCMH in your clinic for assistance in evaluating the patient straightaway. Do not leave the patient unattended while accessing mental health care. Additional guidance can be obtained by calling the Veterans Crisis Line at 1-800-273-8255.
Suicide prevention and safety materials	https://www.mirecc.va.gov/visn19/education/products.asp
General Facts on TBI exposures in OIF/OEF/OND Veterans: includes information on assessments and treatment recommendations	https://www.polytrauma.va.gov/understanding-tbi/
VA Mobile Phone APP store with apps to manage multiple mental health related symptoms	This site contains multiple downloadable apps for managing such symptoms as insomnia, anger, and quitting smoking. It also contains apps to assist with health living strategies. VA App Store VA Mobile
Mobile Phone APP for PTSD symptom management	https://mobile.va.gov/app/ptsd-coach

Abbreviations: OEF: Operation Enduring Freedom; OIF: Operation Iraqi Freedom; OND: Operation New Dawn; PCMH: Primary Care Mental Health Integration Team; PTSD: post-traumatic stress disorder; TBI: traumatic brain injury; VA: Department of Veterans Affairs

VI. References

- Centers for Disease Control Prevention. Report to congress on traumatic brain injury in the United States: Epidemiology and rehabilitation. National Center for Injury Prevention and Control; Division of Unintentional Injury Prevention. 2015:1-72.
- Assistant Secretary of Defense. Traumatic brain injury: Updated definition and reporting. Washington, DC: Department of Defense 2015. Available from: <https://www.health.mil/Reference-Center/Policies/2015/04/06/Traumatic-Brain-Injury-Updated-Definition-and-Reporting>.