

Each year, the Department of Defense (DoD) and the Brain Injury Association of America recognize March as Brain Injury Awareness Month. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 1.7 million people are diagnosed with a brain injury each year.

Individuals develop a brain injury from sustaining physical trauma (i.e., Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)) to the head which disrupts the normal function of the brain, or one can experience non-TBI, which stems from damage to the brain that is not directly caused by an external force (e.g., toxic exposure, stroke, electric shock).

Brain injury is a significant health issue that affects many Airmen during times of peace and war. Understanding brain injury severity (e.g., Mild, Moderate, Severe, Penetrating, or Not Classifiable) is critical to treatment and all Airmen should seek care or evaluation after any type of head injury to determine the most effective treatment.

What should you look for? Know the Signs

The vast majority of TBI cases are concussions, also known as mild traumatic brain injury (mTBI). Since a concussion is an invisible wound, there are no outward physical markers that allow for visible detection. Pay attention to common symptoms after a brain injury, which include headaches, dizziness, memory loss, and confusion.



Source: AF.mil

In the military, the leading causes of TBI for both deployed and non-deployed Airmen are:	Non- TBI can result from an illness or condition within the body such as:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Blasts ➤ Bullets ➤ Fragments ➤ Falls ➤ Motor vehicles (crashes and rollovers) ➤ Sports ➤ Assaults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Anoxia (lack of oxygen to the brain) ➤ Toxic exposure ➤ Stroke ➤ Brain tumor ➤ Meningitis ➤ Aneurysm ➤ Brain hemorrhage

Source: Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center

Recovering from a Brain Injury

If you, your fellow Airmen, or anyone you know has sustained a brain injury, your health care provider, whether in the military or civilian life, will help you get on a path to recovery. There are several treatment options available for brain injury recovery once you have received a professional diagnosis. Most patients (about 90%) with concussions can expect a full recovery within days to weeks, especially if they receive the appropriate diagnosis and management early. Your provider will look for signs of brain injury by using simple tests that measure cognitive function, including speech, movement, memory, and thoughts.



Source: Emerson Scott, LLP

To ensure that you receive the most effective treatment, be transparent with your provider and share specific details about how you sustained the injury and the symptoms you are experiencing. Remember that your health care provider aims to partner with you to help you recover.

Increasing the focus on symptoms and healthy coping strategies will improve your ability to access, seek, and receive care early so that you can continue to serve.

Check out these additional resources to learn more about treatment and programs that can help you prevent, recognize, and recover from a brain injury diagnosis:

Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC):

The DVBIC is the TBI center of excellence for the Defense Health Agency. DVBIC promotes state-of-the-science care from point-of-injury to reintegration for service members to prevent and mitigate consequences of mild to severe TBI.

Wingman Online:

Wingman Online is a website that provides suicide prevention resources to Total Force Airmen to build a resilient Wingman culture. [Click here](#) to view the [Invisible Wounds Airman Training](#) and [Commander Training](#).

A Head for the Future:

A Head for the Future, is an initiative created by the DVBIC, that raises awareness of signs, symptoms, and treatment of TBI. The initiative also educates the military community about the importance of preventing brain injuries.

Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch:

The Armed Forces Health Surveillance Branch is the central epidemiologic health resource for the U.S. military, which plays a critical role in force health protection.

National Resource Directory:

The National Resource Directory connects wounded warriors, service members, veterans and their families with services and resources at the national, state and local levels to support recovery, rehabilitation and community reintegration.

Pink Concussions:

A non-profit organization focusing on pre- and post-injury medical care for women challenged by brain injuries incurred from military service.