

CONCUSSION PROTOCOL



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Concussions are a traumatic brain injury (TBI) caused by a bump, blow or jolt to the head or by a hit to the body. They are usually not life threatening but can be severe and have long-term health impacts.

In the naval services, there were 128,955 TBIs recorded in the Defense Medical Surveillance System (DMSS) from fiscal year 2020 through 2022. At least 12 symptoms of a mild TBI are common with severe TBIs.

Because people cannot “see” a concussion like other common injuries it is often dismissed or minimized by the individual and others around them. Our database is filled with Sailors and Marines who thought, “I’ll be fine,” only to later have significant impairments down the road. A medical professional must diagnose a concussion; therefore, it is imperative that any Sailor or Marine with an injury to the head and any of the symptoms below seek a medical evaluation.

Below are some symptoms of mild and moderate to severe concussions. While even a mild concussion can be serious if not treated, the initial symptoms of a moderate to severe TBI can feel the same and may not show for hours or even days.

Recommendations

1. Use your head. If you hit your head hard enough to cause any of the symptoms listed below, you need to be evaluated by medical professionals, not your roommate or your friend. Initial symptoms of a TBI can worsen and become more dangerous as time passes. Swelling and bleeding in the brain could take time to manifest in visible signs. Pushing through or avoiding medical evaluation could lead to permanent severe disability or even death. Don’t chance it!

2. Know the signs. If you exhibit any signs listed (not all-inclusive) after a head trauma, you need to follow takeaway #1 and seek medical evaluation. Look out for your co-workers, fellow Sailors and Marines. Some symptoms of a TBI can affect your cognitive thought and decision-making abilities, so be aware of changes in other people’s behavior.

Symptom	Mild TBI	Moderate to Severe TBI	Symptom	Mild TBI	Moderate to Severe TBI
Headache	✓	✓	Feeling depressed	✓	✓
Nausea or vomiting	✓	✓	Difficulty sleeping	✓	✓
Fatigue or dizziness	✓	✓	Profound confusion		✓
Speech problems	✓	✓	Convulsions or seizures		✓
Loss of balance	✓	✓	Dilation of one or both pupils		✓
Loss of consciousness for seconds or minutes	✓	✓	Weakness or numbness in fingers and toes		✓
Blurred vision	✓	✓	Loss of coordination		✓
Ringing in ears	✓	✓	Inability to awaken from sleep		✓
Sensitivity to light or sound	✓	✓	Agitation, or combativeness		✓
Mood changes	✓	✓	Coma		✓

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