

HEADS UP



1. Use equipment to protect your head: Break out that helmet for hockey, or put on padded headgear for boxing.
2. Be aware of your surroundings: Keep an eye out for flying elbows, other people, moving or stationary objects, and anything else that could hurt your head.
3. Always wear proper footwear with good traction.
4. Play in well-lit areas and on surfaces appropriate for your activity.
5. Don't tough it out or play through pain. If you need a break, take one. Rest days are important for safe performance.

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Keep Your Head in the Game: Recognize Sports-Related Brain Injury

The military community is active and fit. You enjoy sports — from mixed martial arts to basketball with your buddies — and you play hard. But the best of the best also play smart.

To stay in the game, you need to know how to recognize a brain injury. **The majority of traumatic brain injuries (TBIs) in the military are diagnosed in noncombat settings** — like on the court or the field playing sports — and most injuries are mild or concussions. If you or your teammate have sustained a brain injury or concussion in the game, it's important to know the signs and symptoms and get help right away.

What is a TBI?

A TBI is a blow or jolt to the head that disrupts the function of the brain. Brain injuries can be classified as mild — a concussion — or moderate to severe. Simply keeping safe in your activities can prevent TBI.

Look out for these signs and symptoms of brain injury:

If an incident occurs, in addition to seeking medical attention for immediate injuries and symptoms, be alert to any signs or symptoms of concussions or TBI in the hours and days after the incident.

- Headache or sensation of pressure in the head
- Loss of, or alteration of, consciousness
- Confusion
- Dizziness, feeling off-balance, or the sensation of spinning
- Delayed response to questions
- Ringing in the ears
- Trouble concentrating
- Continued or persistent memory loss

Get help and recover:

- Seek out professional evaluation and assistance right away.
- Rest and limit your activity for as long as your doctor advises.
- Return to normal activity once cleared by a doctor.
- Stop and get checked out if symptoms return.

While moderate and severe TBIs may be easily recognized and require immediate medical attention, concussions — the most common form of TBI in the military — can be more difficult to detect.

