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I'm Caring for a Veteran with Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). What do I need to know?

Caring for Veterans with TBI

Family Caregivers play an important role in recovery. You can offer support, encouragement, and guidance to your injured family member, and help ensure the treatment plan established by the medical professionals caring for the Veteran is followed.

What is TBI?

Traumatic brain injury (TBI) happens when something hits the head hard or makes it move quickly. Injuries may be due to blasts in combat, or as a result of motor vehicle accidents, falls, falling or flying objects, or assaults.

There are some common physical and mental changes that can occur with TBI depending on the type and severity of the injury. Some symptoms may be present immediately, while others may appear later.

- **Physical changes may include:** problems with vision, weakness and coordination, as well as headaches, dizziness, fatigue, pain, and sleep disturbances.
- **Thinking changes may include:** memory and learning problems, decreased concentration, problems with judgment, and slower thinking.
- **Emotional issues may include:** irritability, problems managing anger or frustration, depression, anxiety, adjustment difficulties, and problems with social functioning.

Caregiving Tips

1. It is often difficult for an individual with TBI to multitask, so give one instruction at a time. Try using lists, memory notebooks, and calendars to organize

daily tasks.

2. **Be sensitive to the issue of fatigue.** If your family member seems tired or overwhelmed, suggest they take a break.
3. **Establish a routine** in which your family member pre-plans activities for the day. Scheduling the most important activities for the morning is a good idea, because energy levels tend to decline over the course of the day.
4. **Attend visits to the medical provider with your family member** and provide detailed information about the Veteran's progress and challenges. Ask questions and take notes.
5. **Be supportive and patient**, and don't forget to also take care of yourself. Remember, you are doing the best you can and you are making a difference in your loved one's life.

Resources

- For support and information about the assistance available from VA, call [VA's Caregiver Support Line](#) toll-free at 1-855-260-3274.
- To learn more about TBI, diagnosis, and treatment, visit [VA's Polytrauma website](#), or [VA's Public Health website](#).
- For training on how to care effectively for yourself as a Caregiver, try [VA's Caregiver Self-Care Courses](#).
- [Fact Sheet: I'm Caring for a Veteran with Traumatic Brain Injury \(TBI\), What Do I Need to Know?](#)
- [Invisible Wounds of War at Home: TBI What Families Can Do](#)* (online course by PsychArmor)

Caregiver Support Line

With VA's Caregiver Support Line – 1-855-260-3274 – assistance is just a quick phone call away. If you're just getting started with VA, calling the Caregiver Support Line is a great first step to take to learn more about the support that's available to you.

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