

Traumatic Brain Injury & Domestic Violence

QUICK GUIDE

Domestic violence (or, intimate partner violence) is a pattern of abusive behavior in any relationship used by one partner to gain or maintain power and control over the other. A traumatic brain injury (TBI) can be caused by a blow, hit, or jolt to the head, falls, and strangulation. The connection between the two is strong: nearly 75% of domestic violence survivors have a traumatic brain injury as a result of the abuse¹. This quick guide explores the basic facts, signs, symptoms, and resources available for anyone needing help.

What does domestic violence look like?

Domestic violence can happen to anyone - it affects people of all ages, genders, races, and socioeconomic classes. Domestic violence can be sexual, psychological, and/or physical, but all can be equally as harmful to your overall wellbeing. Sexual and/or physical abuse can lead to a traumatic brain injury if your partner:

- Hit you in the head or face with their body or an object
- Strangled, choked, or restricted your breathing in any way
- Made you fall and hit your head on the ground, wall, or furniture
- Shook you vigorously

How do I know if I have a TBI?

Sometimes there are no visible or obvious signs of TBI. Common signs and symptoms include:

- Frequent headaches
- Vision changes
- Dizziness or balance issues
- Memory or concentration difficulty
- More than normal fatigue or exhaustion
- Trouble sleeping
- Mood swings or trouble controlling emotions
- Nausea or vomiting after being hit in the head

REMEMBER



Only a medical professional can diagnose and treat a TBI. Assessing domestic violence situations often involves a team of professionals that can include law enforcement, domestic violence service providers, mental health professionals, and more.

What should I do if I think I have a TBI as a result of domestic violence?

If you suspect you have sustained a TBI, talk to a doctor immediately. If you can, stay with someone you trust and feel safe with so they can monitor your symptoms and keep you out of harms way. Unfortunately, there is no magic cure for a TBI. However, there are things you can do to help recover faster and easier. Some of the most important things are physical and mental rest, avoiding screens/reading, minimizing stress, avoiding additional head traumas, eating a healthy diet, and most importantly, time. However, we know not everyone has the luxury of doing all of these things and there are many free, confidential resources available to assist with your personal situation.

Resources available in Virginia



Statewide Hotline for Family Violence and Sexual Assault - Call 1.800.838.8238, text 804-793-9999, or use their chat feature on their website: vadata.org/chat



Virginia Action Alliance has a comprehensive directory of service providers in your immediate area and can be contacted to speak over the phone. Visit their website for more information: vsdvalliance.org



Brain Injury Association of Virginia can help you better understand brain injury and consult with you about your personal situation. We can then direct you to services you might need in your area. Our services are confidential and free.

To get in touch:

Call **1-800-444-6443**

Visit **biav.net**

1. Valera, E., Cao, A., Pasternak, O., Shenton, M. E., Kubicki, M., Makris, N., & Adra, N. (2019). White matter correlates of mild traumatic brain injuries in women subjected to intimate-partner violence: a preliminary study. *Journal of Neurotrauma*, 36(5), 661–668. 10.1089/neu.2018.5734