



Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI), Diagnosable Illnesses Secondary to TBI, and the Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) Resource Webcenter

VA remains committed to ensuring that Veterans receive the care and benefits they have earned and deserved. After careful review of the findings of the National Academy of Sciences Report: VA has determined that a revision to regulations to add the five diagnosable illnesses as secondary conditions to TBI is warranted.

This rule change expands the disability compensation rules for secondary service connection for some Veterans living with TBI who also have Parkinson's disease, dementia, depression, unprovoked seizures or certain diseases of the hypothalamus and pituitary glands.

Joint Definition of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI)

The Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) joint definition of TBI is a traumatically induced structural injury and/or physiological disruption of brain function as a result of an external force that is indicated by new onset or worsening of at least one of the following clinical signs, immediately following the event:

- Any period of loss of or a decreased level of consciousness;
- Any loss or memory of events immediately before or after the injury;
- Any alteration in mental state at the time of the injury (confusion, disorientation, slowed thinking, etc.);
- Neurological deficits (weakness, loss of balance, change in vision, praxis, paresis/plegia, sensory loss, aphasia, etc.) that may or may not be transient; or
- Intracranial lesion.

Compensation for Service-connected TBI

Disability Compensation is a monthly payment to a Veteran disabled by TBI that was incurred or aggravated on active duty and for specific diagnosable conditions determined to be proximately due to or the result of service-connected TBI. The Veteran must have been discharged under *other than dishonorable* conditions to be eligible, and must currently suffer from disabling symptoms to receive compensation.

Secondary Service Connection

Secondary Service Connection is service connection for a diagnosable disability proximately due to or the result of a service-connected disease or injury. Under the new rule, VA will consider the following to be secondary to service-connected TBI:

- Parkinsonism, including Parkinson's disease, following moderate or severe TBI;
- Unprovoked seizures following moderate or severe TBI;
- Dementias (presenile dementia of the Alzheimer type, frontotemporal dementia, and dementia with Lewy bodies) if manifest within 15 years following moderate or severe TBI;

- Depression if manifest within 3 years of moderate or severe TBI, or within 12 months of mild TBI; or
- Diseases of hormone deficiency that result from hypothalamo-pituitary changes if manifest within 12 months of moderate or severe TBI.

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC)

The Defense and Veterans Brain Injury Center (DVBIC) is the DoD office of responsibility for tracking TBI data in the U.S. Military and provides data for Servicemembers diagnosed with TBI since 2000. This beneficial webcenter also provides comprehensive information about TBI, a set of resource links for Servicemembers and Veterans, family and friends, medical providers, educational and research material, and a DVBIC worldwide locator. Resource and contact information is available at <http://www.dvbic.org> and the worldwide locator is available at <http://www.dvbic.org/locations>.

Application for Service Connection or Secondary Service Connection

Servicemembers who are within 180 days of discharge may file a pre-discharge claim for TBI online through the VA-DoD eBenefits portal at <https://www.eBenefits.va.gov/ebenefits> or submit an application at a pre-discharge intake site.

If a Veteran has already been evaluated by VA as service-connected for TBI and the Veteran wishes to file a claim for secondary service connection, he or she may also apply online through eBenefits.

If the claimant does not wish to submit a claim online, the claimant may mail his or her claim to the local VA Regional Office or contact the National Call Center (NCC) at 1-800-827-1000. VA counselors and Women Veterans Coordinators are available for assistance.