

Soldiers with brain injuries at higher risk of epilepsy decades later

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Soldiers who receive traumatic brain injuries during war may be at a higher risk of epilepsy even decades after the brain injury occurred. The new research is published in the July 20, 2010, print issue of *Neurology*, the medical journal of the American Academy of Neurology.

"Given the better chances of survival in [soldiers](#) fighting in conflicts today, our research suggests that all veterans with a [traumatic brain injury](#) should be routinely screened for post-traumatic epilepsy, even decades after the injury," said study author Jordan Grafman, PhD, of the National Institute of Neurological Disorders and Stroke in Bethesda, Md.

Post-traumatic epilepsy is the most common cause of new-onset epilepsy in young adults, with nearly 30,000 new cases per year in the United States.

For the study, researchers asked 199 veterans who experienced a brain injury 35 years prior whether they ever had a seizure. They were also given intelligence tests. The group underwent scans to detect [brain lesions](#).

Of the 199 people, about 44 percent developed post-traumatic epilepsy.

"For a surprising 13 percent, the post-traumatic [epilepsy](#) didn't show up until more than 14 years after the brain injury," said Grafman. "This research strongly suggests that veterans with brain injury will require long-term neurology care."

The study also found that the type of seizure changed over time, often becoming more severe (or causing loss of consciousness).

Provided by American Academy of Neurology

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