

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI): Preventing Complications



A spinal cord injury (SCI) causes many changes in the body. Feeling and movement can both be affected. And the functions of many body organs may also be affected. These changes make certain problems more likely to happen. Some of the most common problems are infections (especially urinary infections), constipation, pressure injuries, bone fractures, spasticity, and depression. To help limit these problems, take steps daily to manage your health. Your healthcare team can also help you with your self-care plan and answer any questions you have.

The importance of daily self-care

To stay healthy and prevent further problems, you need to focus on caring for yourself every day. To do this, put yourself in charge of taking care of your body and your health. Stay on top of the self-care tasks you learned during your rehabilitation. Put these tasks together into a routine you follow every day. Be sure to:

- Shift your position every 15 to 30 minutes, or as directed.
- Keep your skin clean and dry, and check it for sores or injury.
- Eat healthy foods and drink enough fluids.
- Keep on top of your bowel and bladder routine.
- Exercise and be as active as you are able.
- Let your care providers know about any problems right away.

Getting used to daily self-care

New skills often take practice. This may be the case with your self-care tasks. At first, you may feel awkward or overwhelmed as you care for yourself. This is normal and understandable. But in time, you'll be able to do your daily activity and self-care with much more confidence. And your body will get used to the routines you set for it.

When complications happen

Even when you do your best to care for your body, problems will happen. Don't be discouraged. Be alert for signs of changes in your body. Get help as soon as you notice a problem. Work with your healthcare providers to care for any problems that arise. And find ways to make problems less likely in the future.

A lifelong goal

With an SCI, staying healthy is a lifelong process. Put what you've learned about caring for yourself and staying healthy into practice each and every day. And go back to your healthcare team whenever you need assistance. They are there to help you care for yourself and stay healthy.

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