



TIPS

for Living With Spinal Cord Injury

A spinal cord injury usually occurs because of a sudden severe blow to the spinal cord, which impairs sensory and motor function. Spinal cord injury is often the result of a motor vehicle accident, violence, or a fall. However, a disease or disorder also can cause a spinal cord injury. If you have spinal cord injury, the following tips can help.

Follow recommendations. To ensure that you receive the proper rehabilitation after your spinal cord injury, follow the instructions of your doctor or therapist. This can include attending regularly scheduled medical appointments for continued therapy and follow-up.

Take steps to overcome grief. Seek the professional help of a counselor, psychiatrist, psychologist, social worker, or other mental health provider if you have persistent feelings of anxiety, sadness, and anger about your spinal cord injury.

Educate yourself as much as possible. Explore the resources that are offered by local groups, state support groups, and nationally recognized spinal cord injury organizations. Be cautious of searching the Internet for topics related to spinal cord injury; instead, rely on websites from reputable organizations that have consolidated information, checklists, and helpful tools.

Communicate effectively. Keep the lines of communication open among family and friends. Convey how you are feeling and what you are thinking. Your family and friends also may be adjusting to your spinal cord injury.

Never ignore pain. If you have pain related to cord injury, speak with your doctor. Complementary therapies such as acupuncture, guided imagery, biofeedback, hypnosis, and yoga can reduce pain. They also may help you cope with stress and improve your emotional and physical well-being.

Make nutrition a focal point. Eating a healthy diet can help you reduce your risk of some complications of spinal cord injury. Good nutrition can help you reach and stay at a healthy weight. Being either underweight or overweight increases your risk of pressure sores.

Continue to exercise. While in rehab, your rehab team will help you to do various exercises to ensure movement. You may be able to do flexibility exercises on your own or with assistance. Strength exercises with free weights or weight machines also can be beneficial.

Maintain your mobility. Mobility is an important part of a spinal cord injury. With the help of mobility devices such as scooters, crutches, walkers, or wheelchairs, you can become independent. These devices may allow you to work, shop, or travel.

This page is part of an ongoing series of practical tips for patients with neurologic disorders. If you have compiled clinically relevant tips that you wish to share, please contact the editor at info@neurologyreviews.com.

Tips for Patients are available for download at www.neurologyreviews.com.

