

## Fast Facts

### Spinal Cord Injury

- When there's damage to any part of the spinal cord or nerves at the end of the spinal cord
- Can involve the vertebrae (bones of your spinal column), ligaments, discs of the spinal column, or the spinal cord itself
- Cause is a traumatic injury, like car accidents, falls, acts of violence, and sports/recreation, or nontraumatic things, such as arthritis, cancer, inflammation, infections, or disc degeneration
- Anyone is at risk for an accident, but certain factors can elevate your chances of developing a spinal cord injury, including being male, being between the ages of 16 – 30, being 65 or older, alcohol use, engaging in risky behavior, or having certain medical conditions (ex. osteoporosis)
- Lowest part of your spinal cord that remains undamaged after an injury is called the neurological level of your injury
- Severity of the injury is often referred to as “completeness”
- If all feeling (sensory) and all ability to control movement (motor function) are lost below the injury area, it's called complete
- If you have some motor or sensory function below the affected area, it's incomplete. It's critical to note that there are varying degrees of incomplete injury
- A chest (thoracic) or lower back (lumbar) injury can affect your torso, legs, bowel and bladder control, and sexual function
- A neck (cervical) injury involves the same areas and affects movements of your arms and, possibly, your ability to breathe
- Paralysis from a spinal cord injury is defined in two ways
- Tetraplegia, or quadriplegia, means that your arms, hands, trunk, legs, and pelvic organs are all affected by your spinal cord injury
- Paraplegia is when paralysis affects all or part of the trunk, legs, and pelvic organs

<i>Symptoms</i>	<i>Treatment</i>	<i>Prevention</i>
<p><i>Emergency:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Extreme back pain</li> <li>-Intense pressure in neck/head/back</li> <li>-Weakness/incoordination/paralysis in any part of your body</li> <li>-Numbness/tingling/loss of sensation in hands/fingers/feet/toes</li> <li>-Loss of bladder/bowel control</li> <li>-Difficulty with balance and walking</li> <li>-Impaired breathing after injury</li> <li>-An oddly positioned or twisted neck or back</li> </ul>	<p><i>Goal:</i> To prevent further injury and empower people with a spinal cord injury to return to an active and productive life</p> <p><i>Initial:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Immobilization devices, such as neck collars or braces</li> <li>-Surgery to remove fragments of bones, foreign objects, herniated disks, or fractured vertebrae</li> <li>-Surgery to stabilize the spine</li> </ul> <p><i>Rehabilitation:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Emphasize maintaining and strengthening muscle function, redeveloping fine</li> </ul>	<p><i>Drive Safely:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Wear a seat belt every time you're in a moving vehicle</li> <li>-Ensure that your children wear a seat belt or use an age- and weight-appropriate child safety seat</li> <li>-Children under age 12 should always ride in the back seat</li> <li>-Don't drive while intoxicated or under the influence of drugs</li> <li>-Don't ride with a driver who's impaired</li> </ul> <p><i>Prevent Falls:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-When trying to reach high-up items, use a step stool with a grab bar</li> </ul>

<p><i>Other Common:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Loss of movement</li> <li>-Loss of or altered sensation (ex. decreased ability to feel heat/cold/touch)</li> <li>-Loss of bowel/bladder control</li> <li>-Exaggerated reflex activities (spasms)</li> <li>-Changes in sexual function/sensitivity/fertility</li> <li>-Pain/intense stinging sensation caused by damage to the nerve fibers in your spinal cord</li> <li>-Difficulty breathing/coughing/clearing secretions from lungs</li> </ul>	<p>motor skills, and learning ways to adapt to do day-to-day tasks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Learn how to prevent complications</li> </ul> <p><i>Support:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Grieve loss of the way you were</li> <li>-Talk with therapist</li> <li>-Educate yourself about your injury</li> <li>-Set new goals</li> <li>-Resume favorite hobbies</li> <li>-Participate in social and fitness activities</li> <li>-Return to school or work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Use the proper safety precautions when on a ladder</li> <li>-Make sure that stairways have handrails</li> <li>-Put nonslip mats on tile floors and in the tub or shower</li> <li>-For young children, use safety gates to block stairs and install window guards</li> </ul> <p><i>Playing Sports:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>-Always wear recommended safety gear</li> <li>-Avoid leading with your head in sports</li> <li>-Always check water depth before diving</li> <li>-Don't dive into a pool unless it's 12 feet or deeper</li> <li>-Never dive into an aboveground pool</li> <li>-Don't dive into water if you don't know how deep it is</li> </ul>
--	---	--

©2022 Demystifying Your Health. All rights reserved.

Demystifying Your Health does not provide medical advice, diagnosis or treatment.

Copyrighted Material Demystifying Your Health.com