



Patient & Family Guide

2022

Sexual Health After Spinal Cord Injury



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Sexual Health After Spinal Cord Injury

After spinal cord injury (SCI), you may have a lot of questions. You may wonder how SCI will affect your:

- › Relationships and roles (parent, peer, friend, partner, etc.)
- › Self-esteem
- › Body image
- › Sex drive (interest)
- › Ability to have sex

These are examples of sexual health.

You may feel:

- › Embarrassed
- › Afraid
- › Nervous
- › Like you do not know what to ask

This is common. It can be hard to talk about your sexual health, especially if you have never talked about it before.

We are here to help.

Your rehabilitation (rehab) team is available to talk with you about any questions or concerns you may have. We are here to help you learn about life after SCI.

Common questions

Can I still have sex?

Yes. While you may experience changes in your sexual function, it is still possible to enjoy sexual activity. You can still:

- › Give and receive pleasure
- › Have sex
- › Experience satisfying and fulfilling relationships

Will I be able to have an erection or have vaginal lubrication (vagina becomes slippery to get ready for sex)?

Yes, but you may need to use sexual devices (like a vibrator or lubricant) to help with erections, stimulation, lubrication, and pleasure.

Can I still have an orgasm?

After SCI, your experience of an orgasm may be different. Your erogenous zones (areas of your body that respond to sexual thoughts and touch) may change. You may need to explore your body to find out what gives you pleasure.

How do I manage bladder and/or bowel issues during sex?

Follow a bowel and bladder schedule that works for your type of injury. Your rehab team will help you make a routine that is right for you. Having a routine will make you more confident during sex and in social settings.

Am I still able to have children?

- **Yes.** In general, SCI does not affect your ability to become pregnant. There are some things to consider before and during pregnancy. We recommend having a maternal-fetal specialist follow your pregnancy. Ask your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) for more information.
- You are still able to make sperm, even though your ability to ejaculate (eject semen from the penis) may be lower. Ask your doctor for more information about sperm retrieval (getting sperm from your body) options.

How do I talk about sex and intimacy with my partner?

- It is important to be open and honest about what you need and want. Talk with your partner about your physical abilities, positioning needs, and areas of your body that respond to sexual pleasure.
- Ask other people with spinal cord injuries or your rehab team for tips and advice.

Online resources

Spinal Cord Injury Sexual Health Website: Sex and SCI – Spinal Cord Injury BC

- › <https://scisexualhealth.ca>

Sexuality After SCI – Mount Sinai Hospital

- › www.sexualitysci.org

Sexuality and Reproductive Health in Adults with Spinal Cord Injury: What You Should Know – A Guide for People with Spinal Cord Injury – Paralyzed Veterans of America

- › <https://pva.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/sexuality-consumer-cpg-2012.pdf>

PleasureAble: Sexual Device Manual for Persons with Disabilities – Spinal Cord Injury BC

- › <https://sci-bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/PleasureABLE-Sexual-Device-Manual-for-PWD.pdf>

Sex and Paralysis Video Series – The Sexual Health Network, Inc.

- › www.drmitchelltepper.com/sex_and_paralysis_video_series

Resources in Nova Scotia

Venus Envy

1727 Barrington Street
Halifax, NS

Staff with knowledge about sexual health and disability, sexual devices and aids, books on sex help, sexuality, and gender

› www.venusenvy.ca

Sexual Health Nova Scotia

List of sexual health centres throughout the province

› www.shns.ca

Urogynecology/General Gynecology Program – IWK

This program is for people with vaginas who have bladder and/or pelvic floor problems. You will need a referral from your doctor.

› Phone: 902-470-6755

Urology patient consultations

Halifax Professional Centre
5991 Spring Garden Road - Suite 620
Halifax, NS

You will need a referral from your doctor.

- Patient consultations:
 - › Phone: 902-425-3940
- Dr. Grantmyre (male infertility specialist):
 - › Phone: 902-420-0044

Perinatal Clinics – Pre-conceptual counselling with maternal-fetal medicine specialists (counselling with specialists before you get pregnant)

IWK Health Centre

You will need a referral from your doctor.

- › Phone: 902-470-8365

Association of Psychologists of Nova Scotia – Counselling services

- › <https://apns.ca/>

Nova Scotia Physiotherapy Association

Pelvic health physiotherapy

- › www.physiotherapyns.ca

Include “pelvic health” in your search.

Accessible pelvic health physiotherapy clinics include:

The Pelvic Health Clinic by Erika Burger
Physiotherapy

- › www.thepelvichealthclinic.com
- › Phone: 902-229-8979

Lifemark Sport Medicine Canada Games Centre

- › www.lifemark.ca/Canada-Games-Centre
- › Phone: 902-404-3888

Windsor Physiotherapy Ltd.

- › www.windsorphysio.ca
- › Phone: 902-798-0026

Looking for more health information?

Find this pamphlet and all our patient resources here: <https://library.nshealth.ca/PatientEducation>

Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazines, and other resources.

For more information, go to <http://library.novascotia.ca>

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time: call 811 or visit <https://811.novascotia.ca>

Learn about other programs and services in your community: call 211 or visit <http://ns.211.ca>

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The information is not intended to be and does not constitute health care or medical advice.

If you have any questions, please ask your health care provider.

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The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years or as needed.