

Living Well with a Spinal Cord Injury

A Pan-Canadian Resource

[Optional—Insert your
hospital/clinic logo here]

Your Routine Care Checklist

This handout offers guidance to manage your health after a spinal cord injury.

If you have concerns, talk with your primary care provider (family doctor, nurse practitioner).

Daily

Task	What to Do	Why it Matters
Skin Check	Check your skin daily (use mirror, phone camera or ask someone to help). Check your tailbone, buttocks and sit bones (ischial tuberosities (ITs)), elbows, heels, and any places that press on a surface. Shift weight every 15-30 minutes. Watch for redness, dark spots, swelling or warmth. Check feet for blisters or ingrown nails.	Prevents pressure injuries. Immediately let your primary care provider know if there are any skin concerns.
Cushion Check	Check the position, air level, gel spread, cleanliness, and pressure relief of your cushion.	Prevents pressure injuries.
Bladder Care	Follow your bladder routine (e.g. catheter schedule).	Prevents leaks and infections.
Bowel Care	Follow your bowel routine every 1-2 days.	Keeps bowels regular and prevents leaks.
Hydration	Drink water often (unless your provider says otherwise). Aim for 2-3 litres per day.	Keeps bladder, bowels, and skin healthy.
Stretching & Movement	Move or stretch every day in a way that is safe for you. A physiotherapist can help you choose exercises.	Keeps muscles flexible and prevents stiffness.

Weekly

Task	What to Do	Why it Matters
Mental Health Check-In	Notice if you feel sad, worried, stressed, or not interested in things you usually enjoy. Talk with someone you trust, a health care provider, counsellor, or peer support. Get outside when you can.	Emotional health is just as important as physical health.
Social Activity	Stay in touch with friends, family, or support groups.	Reduces isolation and boosts mood.
Exercise	Be active in ways that are safe for you. Visit SCI Action Canada Lab for exercise guidelines: 	Supports heart health, strength, and mood.
Check Equipment	Check your wheelchair, braces, ventilator equipment and shower chair for loose, worn or damaged parts. Check manual wheelchair tire pressure.	Prevents injuries and equipment problems.
Check supplies	Check supply levels (catheters, bowel care items, and other needed items).	Helps prevent running out of supplies.

Monthly

Task	What to Do	Why It Matters
Weight & Body Changes	If you can, check your weight. Notice changes in how clothes fit, and how you move or transfer.	Tracks changes in your mental health.
Blood Pressure (BP) Check	Check at least once per month. Know what is normal for you. Keep a journal for comparison.	Some people can have low BP causing light-headedness or autonomic dysreflexia 

Yearly & Long-Term		
Task	How Often	Why It Matters
Periodic Health Exam	Visit your primary care provider at least every 1-2 years for a full health review.	Tracks your overall health.
• Vaccines	Consider and ask about: Flu shot, COVID-19, MMR (measles/mumps/rubella), Tetanus, Pneumococcal, RSV, Shingles.	Vaccines are important. People with SCI are at a higher risk for serious illness.
• Cancer Screening	Colorectal (stool test every 2 years; age 50-74), Cervical (pap test every 5 years; age 25), Breast (mammogram every 2 years; age 40-74), Prostate (talk with your provider about frequency)	Can help find cancer early when it is more treatable.
• Kidney & Bladder Tests	Every 1-2 years or after changes. May include blood/urine tests, kidney ultrasound, urodynamic testing.	Prevents kidney and bladder problems. Some people may need to see a specialist (urologist).
• Bone Health	Every 2-3 years or as advised. Ask about a bone density test.	Checks for weak bones.
• Respiratory (Lung) Health	Every year or as advised. Ask about a lung test (spirometry). Watch for changes in breathing, coughing or chest congestion. Ask for help to quit smoking if needed.	Protects lung health, especially for higher-level injuries. Some people may need to see a specialist (respirologist).
• Sleep Health	Notice if you are tired all the time, have poor sleep or snore. Ask for a sleep test.	Finds sleep issues that affect breathing and daily function.
• Medication Review	Every 6-12 months. Review medications with your provider to ensure they are still right for you.	Prevents side effects, and keeps medication up to date.
• Diabetes & Cholesterol Bloodwork	Start at the time of your injury and every 3 years if normal, or as needed.	Finds early signs of heart or blood sugar problems.
• Sexual Health & Relationships	If you feel comfortable, talk with your provider about your sex life, birth control, and if you wish to have children.	This is an important topic that is often not discussed.
Equipment Review	Every 2-3 years or if things change.	Keeps equipment safe and well-fitting.

Notes

- Track your care and symptom changes in a journal or with the SpineAlly app
- Share this checklist with your caregivers and health care team
- Some individuals may have specialists in their health team i.e. physiatrist, urologist and/or respirologist
- For sudden or serious changes, seek care right away
- Your needs may change over time. Review this checklist each year.

Additional Resources



**SCIRE
Community**



**American Spinal
Injury Association**



Feedback Survey

Please take 2-3 minutes to share your feedback