



Effects of Spinal Cord Injury on Sexuality

Sexuality is an important part of our lives, and it is normal to be concerned about how your SCI will affect your sexual feelings and activities.

Will a Sex Life be Possible After SCI?

Yes, it will. Although some modifications may have to be made in sexual activities, you can still have a full and satisfying sex life. Your attitudes toward sex and how you adapt emotionally to the injury will play an important part in the fulfillment that can be obtained through sexual relationships.

For many individuals with spinal cord injuries, the change in or loss of sensation has the greatest physical and emotional impact. These changes in function and sensitivity will depend greatly on the level and severity of the injury. It is important to be patient during rehabilitation following an SCI; it will take some time from the onset of the injury to determine how much sexual function will return.

Although function and sensitivity below the level of the injury may be altered or lost, other areas above the level of the injury may become increasingly sensitive to stimuli. Many men with spinal cord injuries are able to have erections of some kind, although they may be unable to ejaculate or to experience genital orgasm.

Women, like men, may also not experience orgasm as it is usually defined. However, most women with spinal cord injuries are able to have sexual intercourse. Both men and women can achieve nongenital orgasm by using sensations in other parts of their bodies.

Regardless of whether intercourse is possible, sexual activities can be satisfying to both partners when individuals understand their sexual potential and how to best use the abilities they have. There are many different techniques that people can experiment with to achieve a satisfying and pleasurable relationship. Many individuals with spinal cord injuries believe that sex is much more intimate and spiritual than it was before their injury. These people have learned to find pleasure in discovering their own and their partner's bodies in new and different ways. Although redefining your sexuality following an SCI can be a difficult endeavor, it is essential to be open to new ideas and to maintain good communications with your partner.

Effects of Spinal Cord Injuries on Fertility

In women with spinal cord injuries, the injury usually does not affect their reproductive organs. Thus, most women continue to have menstrual periods, can become pregnant, and can have healthy,





full-term babies. However, when a woman with an SCI is considering becoming pregnant, she should work with her doctor to understand individual problems that she might encounter during pregnancy and delivery. Following an SCI, a man does have a lower chance of producing children. Some men will be able to father children through normal intercourse. Others may consider artificial insemination, although this method should be discussed thoroughly with a physician. Adoption is another alternative for people who wish to have a family. Regardless of whether or not a couple decides to have children, they should discuss the issue of parenting and the responsibilities that follow thoroughly with each other. Your rehabilitation team can also be a useful resource for information about reproduction or parenting.

