



## **How Do I Resume an Active Life Following an SCI?**

### **How Does an SCI Affect Personal Relationships?**

The sudden presence of a disability can be both frightening and confusing to you and your family and friends. You will probably have many questions about your injury and about the steps you should take to begin rehabilitation.

Following an injury such as an SCI, there will be changes in your physical condition as well as changes in how you interact with the world. It is normal to have concerns about the effects of your injury on your lifestyle, your financial situation, and your relationships with other people. Your friends and family may have to take on new responsibilities as a result of your SCI, and it is normal for this to result in some emotional stress. It will take time to adjust to your disability and to manage the difficulties that arise. However, these adjustments can and will be made, and will likely strengthen relationships with many of your friends and family.

During this transitional period, individuals may respond differently to your disability. Your relationship with some people will remain unchanged. However, your interactions with other people may feel a bit awkward at first. Remember that some individuals feel a little strange or uncomfortable around a person

with a disability. This is often the result of their uncertainty as to what to say to you or whether their behavior is appropriate. This often can be overcome by educating these people about your disability. Open communications can have an extremely positive effect on friends and family and will help them adjust to and be comfortable with your disability.

### **Employment After an SCI**

Although it might seem as though an SCI would prevent you from working at a regular job, this is frequently not the case. The ability of a person with an SCI to continue working at the same job depends a great deal on the type of injury the person has sustained and the nature of the work performed. Frequently, people can alter their daily activities or can change jobs to accommodate their injury. Furthermore, a great deal of adaptive equipment is available to assist people with spinal cord injuries as they return to their old or new jobs.

### **Sports and Recreation After an SCI**

After suffering an SCI, you may feel that you cannot participate in those recreational activities you once enjoyed. However, having an SCI does not mean that you must give up your favorite sports and hobbies.

Wheelchair sports have been

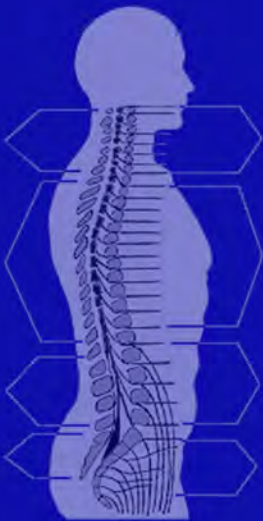




used for enjoyment as well as a rehabilitation tool since World War II, when PVA members started playing wheelchair basketball. Since then, almost every sport has been adapted to allow people with disabilities to participate. In addition, there are many recreational activities available to enhance your life, many of which can be enjoyed with your friends and family.

Wheelchair sports are also an important tool in maintaining postinjury fitness and improving social and mental aspects of life. Developing a well-rounded fitness program and participating in organized sports help to maintain overall good health.

For example, sports such as track and swimming improve the cardiopulmonary system, while other sports such as weightlifting build muscle strength and mass. When you develop the necessary skills to master a particular sport, you improve your balance, mobility, and knowledge of how to handle your wheelchair. Sports like scuba diving and sailing allow you to abandon your chair, while fishing and hunting allow you to enjoy the outdoors. You can pursue these activities at any level, for competition and training or for purely recreational pursuits.



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