

The Spinal Cord Injury Program

At the Fanny Allen Campus



The heart and science of medicine.

THE
University of Vermont
MEDICAL CENTER

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Welcome to the Spinal Cord Injury Program at the Fanny Allen Campus.

Our Mission:

- You are the center of the team.
- You will receive high quality, holistic care that is based on research and best practice.
- We will assist you in regaining skills in self-care, mobility and education that helps to teach you how to manage your challenges.
- We are a team of dedicated, experienced professionals that will treat you with care and compassion and partner with you to develop creative solutions to your challenges.



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Inpatient Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Program

WHAT IS REHABILITATION?

Inpatient Rehab is a supportive environment where you will receive intensive therapy and 24-hour-a-day medical support after your spinal cord injury. Rehab helps you to overcome obstacles and regain as much independence as possible to get back to living your life to the fullest.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN DURING MY REHABILITATION?

When you arrive:

- Welcome to the Rehab Unit!
- You will be evaluated by your Team within the first few days.
- You and your Team members will discuss your goals and develop a treatment plan.

Treatment Days:

- Therapy appointments are listed on the schedule board by the nurses' station and are updated each afternoon for the next day. A daily schedule will also be given to you each morning.
- Monday through Saturday from 8 a.m. until 5 p.m. are busy days of treatment and learning.

Length of Stay:

- Within a week of your admission, you and your Team will determine your tentative discharge date.
- This date will be re-evaluated each week at the multi-disciplinary team conference.

Team Communication:

- The Rehab staff meets weekly in rounds to discuss your progress, goals, and discharge plans.
- Team members are available daily to discuss your treatment plan and to answer any questions.

Patient/Family Education Program:

- Education and support are provided throughout your stay on Rehab.
- Each member of your treatment team will help educate you and your family about topics relating to your spinal cord injury.
- You will receive a spinal cord injury education manual, which will be used at Rehab and is yours to take home.
- How you learn is important to us. We will offer different ways for you to learn about your spinal cord injury to best suit your needs.
- Peer support is available at your request.

This educational tool has been created to help you better understand your SCI. Each person recovers differently. The type of injury you have, your age and other medical conditions play a role in your healing. Information in this binder may apply to some and not others. Your treatment team will help you determine which information applies to you.

Who is on my treatment team?

Your rehab team will have many specialists to help you determine your care needs, establish goals, and develop a treatment plan based on what is most important to you.

YOU:

- Are at the center of the Team
- Communicate your goals to the Team
- Participate in treatment activities and education

PHYSICIANS:

Physiatrist: _____

- Treats and coordinates your medical care and rehab process
- Provides education about your injury and expected recovery

Internist: _____

- Helps manage medical issues that you may have had before your injury or that are new to you

REHAB NURSE: _____

- Helps you manage your bowel and bladder
- Helps you manage your pain and medications
- Helps you learn how to take care of your skin
- Helps you practice the skills you learn during therapies

PHYSICAL THERAPIST (PT): _____

- Helps you strengthen and stretch your muscles
- Helps you with problems you may have because of pain, stiff muscles, joints and skin
- Helps you learn breathing exercises to build your stamina and strength
- Works with you to improve how you move

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST (OT): _____

- Helps you learn to use your body to perform self-care activities such as: eating, dressing, and bathing
- Helps you order equipment you may need for self-care
- Assesses your home, work, and/or school and suggests changes to make it easier to do things

SPEECH AND LANGUAGE PATHOLOGIST (SLP): _____

- Helps you swallow safely
- Helps you get a stronger voice
- Helps with difficulties in memory, reading, writing, listening and thinking

MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGIST: _____

- Helps you and your family learn ways to adapt to your injury
- Gives emotional support to you and your family
- Helps you and your family to prepare for your return home and to the community
- Coordinates your education about spinal cord injury

MEDICAL PSYCHOLOGIST: _____

- Helps you and your family learn ways to adapt to your injury
- Gives emotional support to you and your family
- Helps you and your family to prepare for your return home and to the community
- Coordinates your education about spinal cord injury

RECREATIONAL THERAPIST (RT): _____

- Helps you adapt your recreation activities to your current abilities
- Helps you to meet others with spinal cord injury while you are at Rehab
- Gives you the opportunity to try what you learn in Rehab out in the community

CASE MANAGER: _____

- Assists you with discharge planning and follow-up services
- Helps manage your questions about insurance

SOCIAL WORKER: _____

- Gives emotional support to you and your family
- Helps you plan for discharge and provides information about community resources
- Schedules team and family meetings

DIETICIAN: _____

- Assesses your nutrition and helps you handle your dietary needs
- Educates you on nutritional needs for long term health

RESPIRATORY THERAPIST: _____

- Assesses your breathing and helps the team develop a plan
- Assesses need for respiratory equipment

UROLOGIST: _____

- Teaches you and/or your family how to care for your urinary system
- Helps to evaluate problems with voiding urine and sexual function

What else should I know?

CLOTHING AND PERSONAL ITEMS:

- You should plan to wear your regular clothes during your day.
- You may want loose comfortable clothing for therapies. Therapists will discuss specific recommendations for types of clothes if you are wearing special braces.
- Laundry machines are available on the unit for you or your family to use or laundry can be done by the hospital.

TELEPHONE:

- Your telephone number is: _____
- Each room has a telephone for your convenience. Dial 9 to get an outside line.
- Long-distance phone calls can not be made on this phone. A calling card or pre-paid telephone card is needed.

TELEVISION/RADIO:

- Each room has a TV and VCR. Videos about spinal cord injury are available by contacting OT or PT.
- If you wish, you may want to bring in a portable battery-powered radio/CD player for rest times.

INTERNET ACCESS:

- You can access the web by using computers on the Rehab floors. If you are interested, your therapists can help you find helpful websites.
- You can use your own laptop in your room, and wireless Internet access can be arranged through Recreation Therapy.

LEAVING THE NURSING UNIT:

- You must stay on hospital grounds unless you are on a therapeutic outing with one of your therapists.
- When you leave the nursing unit, let your nurse know where you are going and when you plan to return.

SMOKING:

- Not allowed anywhere inside the hospital or on hospital property.

DRUGS/ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES:

- Use of drugs (except as ordered by your doctor) and alcoholic beverages are not allowed in the hospital or on hospital grounds.

COMPLIMENTS/COMPLAINTS:

- To give a compliment or complaint, please contact Patient and Family Advocacy: 847-3755.
- Please fill out the Patient Satisfaction Survey. Your suggestions are always welcomed by our staff, as we want to provide you the best service and care available.

Your Spinal Cord Injury

1. Your spinal cord injury is (circle one) :

Complete Incomplete

Traumatic Non-traumatic

2. Your injury was caused by:

3. Your level of injury is: _____

Your ASIA level is: _____ See attached ASIA table.

4. Medical treatment for your injury:

_____ Surgery: _____

_____ No surgery: _____

_____ Spine precautions:

What are they? _____

How long do I need to follow them? _____

_____ Bracing you need to use: _____

Length of time: _____

Understanding Your Spinal Cord Injury

The ASIA impairment scale is used to evaluate the sensation and movement of a person who has had a spinal cord injury (SCI). This test is usually done the week of admission to and discharge from our inpatient rehab center; it may also be done in acute care or the outpatient setting. This test helps your team know if you have a complete or incomplete SCI and monitor for changes in sensation and motor strength. This information will help you and your team plan your care.

ASIA IMPAIRMENT SCALE

A= Complete: No motor or sensory function is preserved in the sacral segments S4-S5.

B= Incomplete: Sensory but not motor function is preserved below the neurological level and includes the sacral segments S4-S5.

C= Incomplete: Motor function is preserved below the neurological level, and more than half of key muscles below the neurological level have a muscle grade less than 3.

D= Incomplete: Motor function is preserved below the neurological level, and at least half of key muscles below the neurological level have a muscle grade of 3 or more.

E= Normal: motor and sensory function are normal.

CLINICAL SYNDROMES

- Central Cord
- Brown-Sequard
- Anterior Cord
- Conus Medullaris
- Cauda Equina

WHAT IS THE SPINAL CORD?

- The **spinal cord** is a bundle of **nerves** that runs from your head to your tailbone in a bony tunnel. This bony tunnel is made up of 33 **vertebrae** that make up the spinal column.
- The nerves in your spinal cord carry messages back and forth between your brain and the rest of your body.
- The spinal cord is about 18 inches long and is protected by 7 **cervical** vertebrae in the neck, 12 **thoracic** vertebrae in the upper back, 5 **lumbar** in the low back, 5 fused **sacral** vertebrae in the hip area, and 4 fused vertebrae in the tailbone.

WHAT IS A SPINAL CORD INJURY?

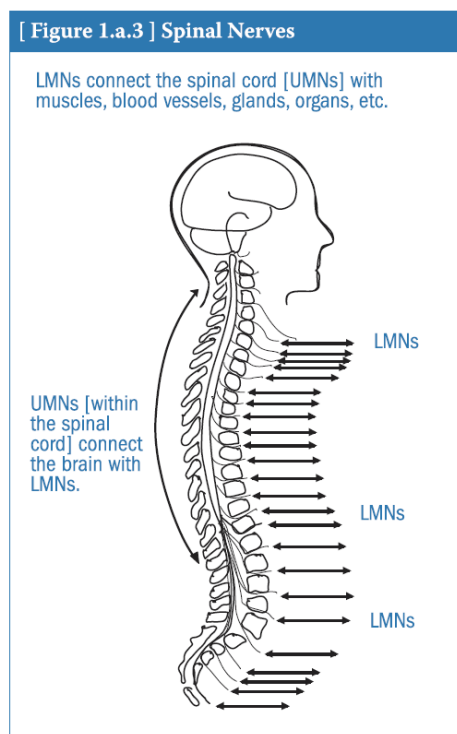
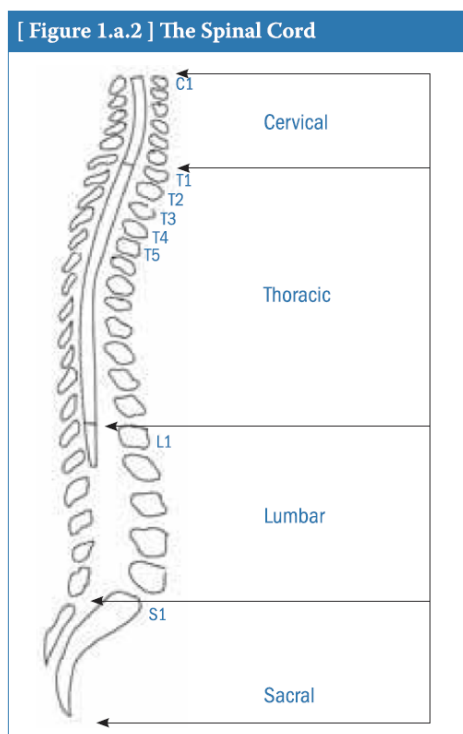
- A spinal cord injury occurs when the nerves within your spinal cord are damaged by an injury, cancer, infection, or circulatory problems.
- The damage makes it hard or impossible for the nerves to help you feel or move part of your body.
- If a nerve cell is diseased, bruised, or swollen, it may recover, causing temporary damage. If a nerve cell is damaged and dies, it will not grow back again. In this case the damage will be permanent.

HOW IS A SPINAL CORD INJURY NAMED?

- Spinal cord injuries are named by the lowest point on the spinal cord that has normal movement and sensation.
- **Tetraplegia** (also called **quadriplegia**) refers to an injury at the neck (*cervical*) level. These injuries result in partial or total paralysis of the neck, arms, and upper chest, trunk and legs.
- **Paraplegia** happens when the injury occurs in the thoracic, lumbar, or sacral areas. These injuries result in partial or total paralysis of the chest, hips, legs, and feet.
- When there is no voluntary movement or feeling below the spinal cord injury level, it is a **complete** spinal cord injury.
- When there is some feeling or voluntary movement below the level of injury, it is an **incomplete** spinal cord injury.

WHAT CAN BE EXPECTED AFTER A SPINAL CORD INJURY?

- How much movement the person with a spinal cord injury has depends on the level and severity of the spinal cord injury.
- In addition to changes in movement and feeling, there may be changes in breathing/coughing, bowel, and bladder control.
- Intimacy and sexual functioning are still possible. See the sexuality section of your notebook, or talk with a member of your Rehab team for information.
- Adjusting to life with a spinal cord injury is often stressful for the individual and those around them. Counseling may be helpful. Ask a member of your Rehab team for more information.
- Testing, your doctor's evaluation and ASIA can predict your outcome.



PLEASE ASK QUESTIONS

The more you know, the better you will be able to take care of yourself.

Understanding Your Spinal Cord Injury

Additional Resources

- _____ 1. The Paralyzed Veterans of America. *An Introduction to Spinal Cord Injury, Understanding the Changes*. 4th Ed.
<http://www.pva.org/site/DocServer/IntroSCI.pdf?docID=664>
- _____ 2. The Paralyzed Veterans of America. *Expected Outcomes: What You Should Know* (Choose your level of injury).
www.pva.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pubs_generalpubs
- _____ 3. The University of Alabama. *Spinal Cord Injury Info Sheet:4 Understanding SCI & Functional Goals*

