

TEN COMMON HEALTH COMPLICATIONS OF SPINAL CORD TRAUMA

HEALTH ISSUES #32

Because the spinal cord is critical to so many bodily functions, spinal cord trauma, however slight, can cause a wide range of secondary complications as demonstrated in a recent comprehensive study.

Bowel control: The stomach and intestines may continue to function, but control of bowel movements is often altered or lost.

Blood clots: Clotting can be of particular concern for spinal cord injury patients as immobility reduces blood flow through the veins.

Pneumonia/Asthma: Both are common long-term health issues because muscles associated with breathing are often weakened, especially in cases of thoracic injury.

Autonomic Dysreflexia: This condition occurs when a stimulus below the injury site triggers a message to the brain that cannot be received normally.

Incontinence: The bladder will continue to store urine from the kidneys, but the brain may not be able to control the bladder because trauma to the spinal cord will affect the neurological communication.

Circulation Issues: Spinal cord injuries can result in circulatory problems ranging from low blood pressure when sitting up to swelling of the extremities.

Respiratory System Complications: The neurological level of injury will determine what kind of breathing problems the patient may encounter.

Muscle tone: Patients with spinal cord injuries might experience one of two common types of muscle tone issues.

Fitness and Wellness: Limited mobility may lead to a more sedentary lifestyle, placing the patient at risk of obesity, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

Sexual Health: Sexuality, fertility and sexual function is often affected after a spinal cord injury.

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