

# Living Well with Spasticity



## You should:

- Learn how to keep your joints in a good position
- Do the exercises that you have been taught
- Talk to your doctor about medications that might help



## Learn How to Help Yourself!

**Spasticity** can make your muscles contract or tighten without your control. It can be mild or very strong. It can interfere with your quality of life.

It can:

- cause pain
- increase the risk of skin problems
- cause joint stiffness
- make it difficult to sit comfortably
- interfere with washing your hands properly, personal hygiene or getting dressed
- interfere with movements such as getting in and out of bed, using your wheelchair or walking safely
- affect balance and result in falls



Spasticity is something that may not go away. But with the help of your doctor and therapists, you can learn how to take control of your spasticity. They will teach you what you need to know and do. The rest is up to you!

## **What makes spasticity worse?**

There are many things that can make your spasticity worse. These include:

- Infections
- Skin wounds or sores
- Hemorrhoids or constipation
- Being over tired
- Being too hot or too cold
- Stress
- Pain
- Time of day
- Clothing that is too tight
- Certain body positions
- A woman's menstrual cycle
- Change in weather
- Effort — if you try to walk too fast or do an activity that requires a lot of strength

Pay attention to what makes your spasticity worse. If you deal with the cause, you can reduce your spasticity.

## **When should you discuss your spasticity with your doctor, nurse or therapist?**

Sometimes if spasticity is getting worse, it may mean that your medical problems are getting worse. Discuss with your doctor or health care professional:

- If you have skin sores or skin redness under your splint.
- If you have more pain in your stiff muscles.
- If it is getting harder to move around or get in and out of your bed or chair.
- If you notice that your stiffness is increasing and it is becoming more difficult to do things that you could do before.
- If you have problems with the drugs you are taking for your muscle spasms or stiffness.



**If your spasticity is getting worse, contact your doctor.**

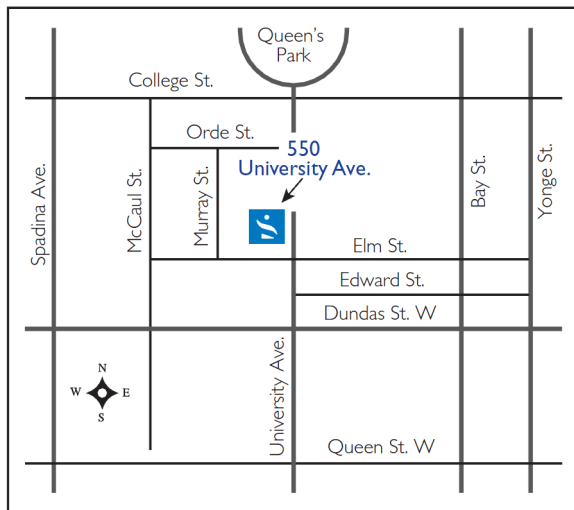
## What can you do to help yourself?

- Take all medications exactly as you have been told. If you are having any difficulty with this, contact your doctor.
- If you have a splint for your hand or foot, use it exactly as you have been shown. If it causes **any redness or pain, contact your therapist.**
- Do your exercises regularly and as taught by your therapist. **Remember that exercise should never cause pain.**
- Remember that being over-tired can make your spasticity worse. Plan your day to avoid becoming over-tired.
- Try to keep a regular sleep schedule.
- Try not to sit in one position for more than 1-2 hours.
- Dress in layers so that you don't become too hot or too cold.
- Dress in clothing that is not too tight.
- Talk to your health care team about ways to handle stress.
- Avoid skin infections. Keep your skin clean and dry. Regularly check your hands and feet for cuts or blisters.
- See your doctor early if you think you have a bladder infection.

## Where can I get more information?

We offer clinic appointments at two Toronto Rehab locations:

University Centre  
1st Floor South Outpatient Clinic  
550 University Avenue  
Toronto, ON M5G 2A2  
(corner of Elm and University)



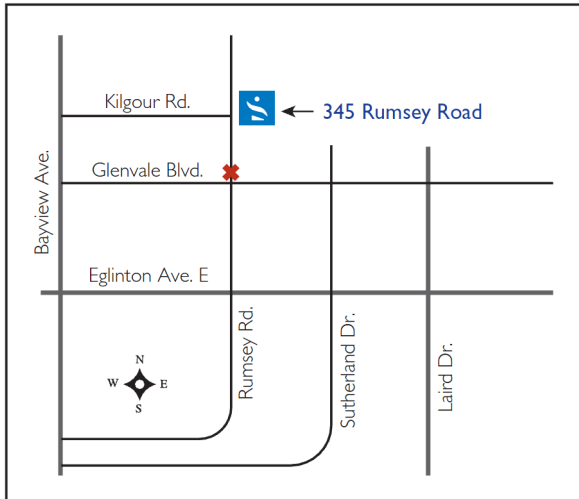
Clinic Phone: 416 597 3422 #3974

Clinic Fax: 416 597 7172

Website: [www.torontorehab.com](http://www.torontorehab.com)

Rumsey Centre  
345 Rumsey Rd.  
Toronto, ON M4G 1R7  
(close to Bayview and Eglinton)

✘ Please note: only parking passholders can access from Rumsey Road



To connect to a list of websites with information about spasticity go to:  
[www.torontorehab.com/Health-Conditions-A-Z/Spasticity](http://www.torontorehab.com/Health-Conditions-A-Z/Spasticity)

## **My Toronto Rehab Health Care Team:**

Spasticity Clinic Phone No: 416 597 3422 ext.7009

My Service Coordinator:

My Doctor:

My Nurse:

My Occupational Therapist:

My Physiotherapist:

My Physiotherapy Assistant:

My Occupational Therapy Assistant:



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