



Staying Healthy

(100,000km Tune-Up Checklist)

After a spinal cord injury, there is a higher risk of having health issues. These can keep you from doing the things you like. To live a long and healthy life, you will need to take extra care of yourself. Below is a checklist of things you should do to help you stay healthy.

Get Regular Checkups

- Doctor checkup (yearly):** Having regular visits with your family doctor can keep you healthy and reduces the need for emergency visits. Talk about changes to your mood, mental health, or well-being. Your doctor should check your heart rate, blood pressure, blood sugar, cholesterol and vitamin D once a year. Get your flu shot each fall and keep your vaccines up to date.
- Keep your vaccinations up to date.**
- Neurology checkup:** An annual neurologic exam by your Physiatrist or a Neurologist to screen for changes (improvement or deterioration) in your muscles or nerves.
- Urology tests (yearly):** Bladder and kidney health is important after spinal cord injury. Getting a kidney and bladder ultrasound every year can help find kidney stones or other kidney problems. Your urologist should do a scope if you have an indwelling catheter, stones or recurrent urinary tract infections.
- Bone tests (every 1-2 years):** Spinal cord injury can make your bones weaker. This can increase the risk of fractures during regular activities. Get a bone density exam every 1-2 years to find out what your fracture risk is.
- Breathing tests:** Spinal cord injury can increase your risk of chest infections, having a weak cough or developing sleep apnea. Ask your doctor if you need breath-stacking, breathing, or sleep apnea screening tests.
- Cancer tests:** A spinal cord injury can put you at risk of certain types of cancer. In general, monthly breast self-exams and testicle self-exams need to be done. Other routine cancer screenings are available.
 - Colonoscopy (after age 50)
 - Prostate exam (men after age 40)

Contact your Doctor or Nurse for more information.

MEDICAL

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SCE2-Ga2-2015-10-28



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- Pap smear and pelvic exam (women every three years)
- Mammogram (women over age 40 every two years)

Stay Healthy and Active Every Day

Important activities after spinal cord injury

- Eat 20-30 grams of fibre each day. This can help with your bowel health and cholesterol.
- Reduce your risk of pressure injury. Pressure relieve in your wheelchair every 15 minutes by leaning forward, side-to-side or tilting. Use pillows to reduce pressure when in bed.
- Check your skin every day and check your wheelchair regularly.
- Service your wheelchair and medical devices 1-2 times per year. Make sure they work well and that your wheelchair seating is set up properly. Get help right away if you have a problem with your wheelchair cushion.

Maintain a balanced lifestyle

- Exercise regularly. Do at least 20 minutes of aerobic exercise two times per week. Do strength training at least 2 times per week.
- Drink 2-3 liters of clear fluids each day. This helps your bladder, bowel, and blood pressure.
- Keep a healthy weight. This helps your transfers, skin health, and heart.
- Quit smoking. Smoking is bad for your heart and lungs.
- Keep your caffeine intake to less than three servings per day.
- Control your alcohol intake and avoid binge drinking.
- Practice stress reduction strategies.

Participate

- Take up a hobby.
- Find a job or go to school.
- Volunteer to give back to the community.
- Participate in research.

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Stay Organized

- Keep a list of your surgeries, medications, and allergies.
- Prepare for your medical appointments by organizing your questions and prescription refill needs prior to your visit.
- Use MyUHN Patient Portal www.myUHN.ca to update your medications prior to a clinic visit
- If you have autonomic dysreflexia (AD), always carry your AD information card.
- Keep a file of your spine and other images (CT, X-ray, MRI).

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