



Sexual Self-Discovery and Body Mapping

Having a spinal cord injury may change how you have sex and experience sexual pleasure. You may need to relearn how your body feels as your sensations may have changed. Exploring your body sensations is an important part of sexual recovery after a spinal cord injury.

Sexual recovery is important. Sexual recovery means understanding physical changes, such as changes to your movement and body sensations. It also means exploring your emotions and thoughts about your sexual self. Sexual function and intimacy are important parts of your health and wellbeing.

- **Sexual function** is what you do sexually and how your body responds. Sexual function does not only mean penetrative sex (penis in vagina, anal or oral sex). It also includes other ways of expressing yourself sexually, like touching and kissing.
- **Intimacy** is the physical and emotional closeness you share with another person.

A spinal cord injury can affect your intimacy with another person and your sexual function.

Recovering your sexual health

A large part of sexual recovery is exploring new ways to experience pleasure. It is best to explore your body in a setting where you will not feel judged. You can:

- Relearn your body sensations to know what feels good for you now. One way to relearn your body sensations is to do body mapping activities.
- Use erotic thoughts to help get you in the mood.

Share what you learn about yourself with your partner. Communicating what feels good for you will enhance sexual pleasure.

Body Mapping

Body mapping is a mindfulness-based activity meant to find out what feels good for you. This activity uses touch to become more aware of your sensations. You or a partner touch different areas of your body while you focus on the sensations you feel. Body mapping also helps you develop sexual pleasure from new areas of your body. Practicing touching

Contact your Doctor or Nurse for more information.

SELF-CARE

©2022 University Health Network - Toronto Rehab. All rights reserved. **Disclaimer:** Information is provided for educational purposes only. Consult a qualified health professional regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. University Health Network does not assume and disclaims any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in this publication.

www.SpinalCordEssentials.ca
SCE2-Sd9-2022-02-06

Sexual Self-Discovery and Body Mapping

different areas of the body while thinking erotic thoughts helps your brain connect the area to sexual pleasure.

Getting started with body mapping

- Think about your goal for body mapping before starting. Are you hoping to develop an orgasmic response (sexual climax)? Are you simply trying to find areas that feel pleasurable?
- Focus on what you feel instead of what you no longer feel. Focusing on what you no longer feel can stop you from finding a new pleasurable sensation.
- Some people find it helpful to use an aide or adaptive device to hold onto an object when body mapping. Your Occupational Therapist can suggest devices and positioning.
- If troubling thoughts distract you from your body sensations, take a moment to notice what you are thinking. Acknowledge these thoughts, and try to move your focus back to your body sensations.
- Be patient and keep an open mind. In the beginning, you may find it difficult to focus on pleasurable sensations but it gets easier with practice.
- Celebrate the small changes and discoveries you make. With practice, these sensations will develop into new ways of experiencing sexual arousal and pleasure.



Body mapping activity

Try to practice this activity at least one time each week. You may want to do body mapping activities more often or for longer if, your goal is to develop an orgasmic response.

1. Find a quiet, comfortable position sitting or lying down.
2. Focus your attention on the sensations in your body, such as warm, cool or tingling. It may help to close your eyes.
3. Take a slow, deep breath and think of erotic thoughts.
4. Start by touching an area of your body where you have full sensation. Use anything you want to touch yourself with, for example, your finger, a feather, or a cuff device. Notice what sensations you feel, such as warmth, pressure or tingling.

Contact your Doctor or Nurse for more information.

SELF-CARE

©2022 University Health Network - Toronto Rehab. All rights reserved. **Disclaimer:** Information is provided for educational purposes only. Consult a qualified health professional regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. University Health Network does not assume and disclaims any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in this publication.

www.SpinalCordEssentials.ca
SCE2-Sd9-2022-02-06

Sexual Self-Discovery and Body Mapping

5. Move to touching other areas of your body where you have sensation. Notice the sensations you feel. Experiment with different devices, pressures, textures, and temperatures.
6. Continue to move around your body and notice where your sensation has changed. Notice the sensations you feel or do not feel.
7. As you touch different areas of your body, notice:
 - the areas where feelings are stronger or weaker
 - the areas that may be too sensitive to touch
 - how different pressures, textures or temperatures feel in different areas
 - what areas of your body feel good to touch
 - what areas of your body you don't like being touched

Stop the activity if you get a headache or the skin above your injury flushes (turns red). These symptoms are signs of autonomic dysreflexia (sudden onset of extremely high blood pressure).

- See handout on **Autonomic Dysreflexia** for more information.

Contact your Doctor or Nurse for more information.

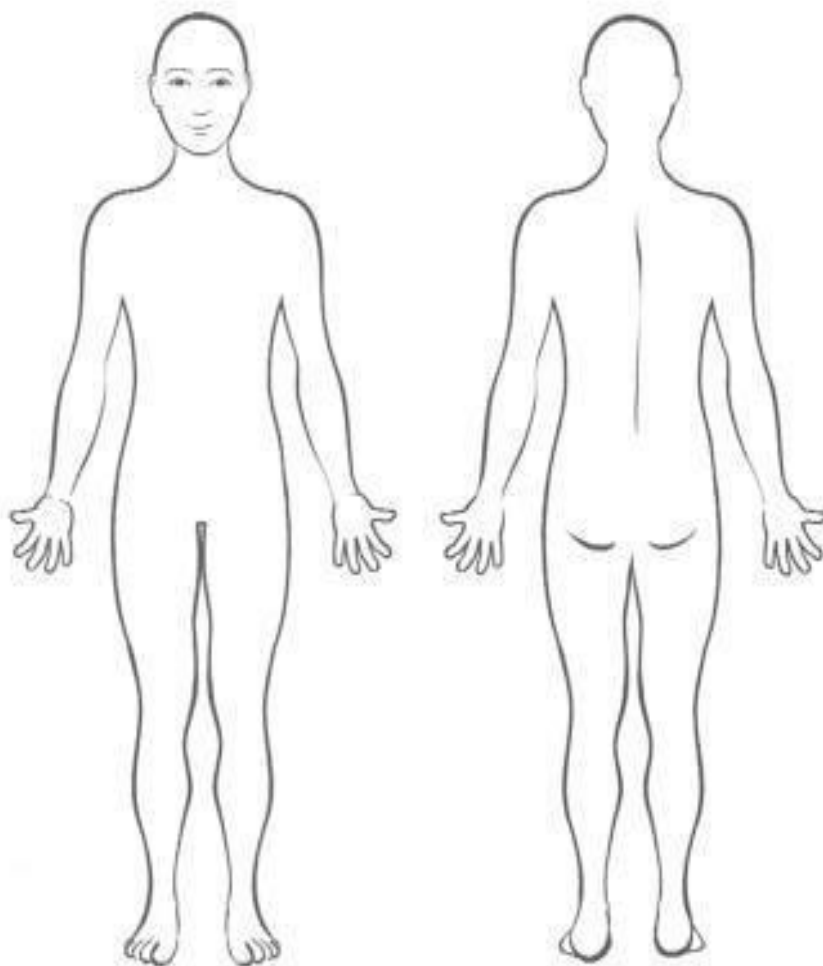
SELF-CARE

©2022 University Health Network - Toronto Rehab. All rights reserved. **Disclaimer:** Information is provided for educational purposes only. Consult a qualified health professional regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. University Health Network does not assume and disclaims any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in this publication.

www.SpinalCordEssentials.ca
SCE2-Sd9-2022-02-06

Sexual Self-Discovery and Body Mapping

You can use this diagram to write down the sensations you feel in different areas of your body.



Symbol	Meaning
	Don't touch here
	This feels really good
?	Need to explore further
Colour	Meaning
	Don't touch here (no sensation or painful sensation)
	Little bit of sensation
	Full sensation
Number	Type of Pressure
1	Very lite pressure feels best
2	Medium pressure feels best
3	Firm pressure feels best

Is it safe to do body mapping or have sex?

Sex and body mapping can cause autonomic dysreflexia (sudden onset of extremely high blood pressure). Use this body mapping activity to discover if any sexual touch causes autonomic dysreflexia for you.

Contact your Doctor or Nurse for more information.

SELF-CARE

©2022 University Health Network - Toronto Rehab. All rights reserved. **Disclaimer:** Information is provided for educational purposes only. Consult a qualified health professional regarding specific medical concerns or treatment. University Health Network does not assume and disclaims any liability to any party for any loss or damage caused by errors or omissions in this publication.

www.SpinalCordEssentials.ca
SCE2-Sd9-2022-02-06