

# Health Tips

Healthy living requires attention to your physical, emotional, and cognitive health. Here is a list of key ways to decrease risk of health problems while increasing overall health and happiness!

## Body

- ◆ Eat a balanced diet
  - High Fiber
  - Limit red meat to 3–4 times a week
  - Limit consumption of fats and sugar
- ◆ Control weight
- ◆ Exercise at least 3 times a week for 20 minutes
- ◆ Monthly self-breast examinations
- ◆ Limit alcohol use \*
- ◆ Limit caffeine use \*
- ◆ Check skin daily for signs of breakdown (early pressure ulcers)
- ◆ Use sunscreen
- ◆ Practice safe sex
- ◆ Take medications as prescribed
- ◆ Don't smoke or be around smoke \*
- ◆ Don't use illicit drugs

## Mind



- ◆ Read regularly
- ◆ Work puzzles
- ◆ Use a calendar
- ◆ Pay attention
- ◆ Keep up with current events
- ◆ Take notes

## Emotional/Social



- ◆ Get together with friends regularly
- ◆ Laugh a lot
- ◆ Look forward to something every day
- ◆ Forgive and forget
- ◆ Adopt a positive attitude
- ◆ Problem solve
- ◆ Look for ways to provide community service

*\* Caffeine, alcohol, and cigarette smoking deplete calcium and are risk factors to breast and bladder cancer and osteoporosis*

For additional resources visit:



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# Women's Health



Special considerations  
for women with  
spinal cord injuries  
and disorders

# Introduction

Regular health care is an important part of quality of life for all women, but for those of us with spinal cord injuries and disorders (SCI/D), the right care is often difficult to find. Information pertaining to the unique medical needs and health concerns of women living with SCI/D is not always readily available. With this understanding, United Spinal Association has taken the initiative to provide information and access to resources for women with SCI/D, including this Health Tips checklist.

There are numerous women's health care issues that continue despite SCI/D. In addition to arranging for these important tests and screening procedures, women with SCI/D need to find facilities that offer these services in a way that is accessible, both physically and attitudinally. Finding health care providers that understand the special needs of women with SCI/D may be a challenge.

What follows is a useful checklist, not only for your personal information, but also for educating your primary care provider on what he or she needs to know about the specific or unique health care needs of women with SCI/D.



## Monthly

### Self-breast Examination:

If you cannot do this yourself, you may need to train a partner or personal care attendant to assist you with this. You may want to ask your primary provider to help train this person.

## Every Six Months

### Teeth Cleaning and Dental Examination

## Yearly

### Physical Examination

**Pelvic Exam and Pap Smear:** Your provider may need information on how to do this for a woman with SCI/D. Call ahead to be sure the examining table is accessible or if a lift is available.

**Sexually Transmitted Disease Screening:** If you are sexually active and non-monogamous, this is an important procedure.

### Breast Examination

**Vital Signs:** Be sure your physician takes your blood pressure, heart rate, and respiration rate.

### Skin Check by a Clinician:

Ensure that a trained skin specialist carefully checks all of your skin surfaces for breakdowns such as pressure ulcers and abnormalities that could indicate skin cancer. It is also important that you do this for yourself on a daily basis, if possible.



## Vision Examination and Glaucoma Screening

### Laboratory tests:

- ◆ Blood tests—CBC and chemistry panel, lipids, and fasting blood sugar.
- ◆ Urinalysis and urine culture.
- ◆ Urodynamics, if indicated.



### Discuss With Your Provider:

- ◆ Your risk for heart disease and diabetes. Take action to decrease your risks—stop smoking, eat a low-fat diet—because people with SCI/D are at a higher risk than those without SCI/D.
- ◆ Bladder cancer screening, particularly if you use an indwelling catheter.
- ◆ Your risk for osteoporosis. While the benefits of screening and management for pre- and post-menopausal women with SCI/D remains under evaluation, be sure to get your care provider's recommendation.
- ◆ The unique side-effects and impacts of all birth control options.

## At Age 40:

- ◆ **Baseline Mammogram** (earlier if you have a family history of breast cancer). Be sure to ask for a clinic with wheelchair accessible machines.

## Age 40–49:

- ◆ **Mammogram** every 1–2 years.

## Age 50 and Older:

- ◆ **Mammogram** (every year)
- ◆ **Colonoscopy** (every 5 years)