

AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA (also known as HYPERREFLEXIA)

OBJECTIVES

After reading this topic on “Autonomic Dysreflexia”, you will be able to:

1. State briefly the definition of autonomic dysreflexia.
2. Identify the causes of autonomic dysreflexia.
3. Identify the common signs and symptoms of autonomic dysreflexia.
4. State what to do in the event of autonomic dysreflexia.



AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA (also known as “HYPERREFLEXIA”)

****** Autonomic Dysreflexia is a life threatening Emergency and demand Immediate Attention ******

This condition happens to patients whose SC injuries are at or above the level of Thoracic 6. This means that when your SCI injury is somewhere between cervical 1 through thoracic 6, you may experience this condition. It is important to recognize autonomic dysreflexia and know what causes it and how to treat it as it is life threatening.

Dysreflexia occurs as a response of your body to noxious stimulus such as:

- a full bladder that accounts to 85% as a cause
- a full bowel
- pressure sore or “bedsore” dressing
- infection
- ingrown toenails
- tight clothing

Any of these factors can trigger signs and symptoms of Dysreflexia that may include:

- Hypertension
- Severe headache
- Slow heart rate
- Sweating and flushing of your skin above the level of injury
- Nasal congestion or stuffy nose
- Chills with no fever and /or goose bumps
- Blurred vision
- Nausea
- Anxiety

What Do You Need to DO

- raising your bed to as high as it can get if you are in bed, or sit up straight with your legs down to lower your blood pressure
- Remove your abdominal binder and TED hose stocking if you are wearing them
- **CALL YOUR DOCTOR AND/OR CALL 911 FOR YOU TO BE TRANSPORTED TO THE EMERGENCY ROOM.**

It is also very important that you **carry a card** that is **in your wallet**. This will alert the medical staff when you get into the emergency care.

Autonomic Dysreflexia is preventable if you take care of yourself and follow the proper management of your bladder, bowel, and skin.

- Always follow your bladder program at the right time.
- Follow your bowel program at the right time.
- Inspect your skin twice daily for any possible skin breakdown or pressure sore.
- **GET HELP** if you cannot find the cause.

6/2002

mpyl