

Adjustment and Depression after SCI

Adjusting to life after SCI takes time. Overall, it is more common for people to adjust well and not be depressed than it is for people to become depressed. Adjustment to your new body, a change in independence or in role (spouse, work, family, etc), as well as coping with other medical issues (pain, spasticity, etc.) can be difficult. It may be useful to talk to someone who can help you figure out how to cope most effectively.

Research has shown that approximately 22% of individuals with SCI develop depression which requires treatment (either psychotherapy, medication, or a combination of both). This rate is higher than in the general population (where about 5% of people are depressed), but it is NOT an expected effect of SCI that needs to be treated. We have also found that early treatment may be best as those who become depressed soon after injury often stay depressed.

Tell your health care provider if you:

- Feel down much of the time
- Feel hopeless
- Have trouble with sleep (too much or too little)
- Have trouble with your appetite (eating too much or too little)
- Ever think that life may not be worth living

Your health care provider can help you get the right treatment.

Resources

For patients:

- SCI Patient Education Pamphlet on Depression and SCI at <http://sci.washington.edu/info/pamphlets/>
- SCI Forum Video Series about Adjustment and Psychosocial issues after SCI at <http://sci.washington.edu/info/newsletters/articles/#a>
- UAB School of Medicine: Adjustment to SCI at <http://www.uab.edu/medicine/sci/daily-living/adjustment>

For health care providers:

Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine. (2009). *Depression Following Spinal Cord Injury. A Clinical Practice Guideline for Primary Care Physician*. Washington, D.C.: Paralyzed Veterans of America. Retrieved from <http://www.pva.org/CMSPages/GetFile.aspx?guid=cfca724c-8461-40fe-b016-5a57f14a7c72>

Authors: **Jeanne M. Hoffman, Ph.D, ABPP**
Carolyn Hoppe-Denend, Ph.D, CRC
UW Medicine SCI Core Group

Maria Regina Reyes, MD- Editor/Project Director

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace the advice from a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider regarding specific medical concerns or treatment.

The SCI Empowerment Project is funded by a grant from the **Craig H. Neilsen Foundation** to the Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, University of Washington, Seattle, WA.

