

COVID-19 Guidance for People Living with Spinal Cord Injury

This information sheet has been put together to help you know what to do during this phase of the COVID-19 pandemic.

People with a spinal cord injury often have a harder time with breathing and lung function. They may also be at risk of disruption to social supports like attendant service.

Prevention

- Stay home except to get medical care.
- If you need to leave home, try to stay 2m away from others and avoid large groups.
- Wash your hands regularly with warm soap and water for 20-30 seconds, or use hand sanitizer.
- Clean regularly all surfaces that you frequently touch, including your phone, wheelchair joystick and armrests, tray, push rims, assistive devices.....
- Prepare your emergency supplies; consult this guide:
<https://www.getprepared.gc.ca/cnt/rsrscs/pblctns/pplwthdsblts/pplwthdsblts-eng.pdf>
- Keep 30 days of medical supplies (catheters and dressing supplies) and medication on hand.

Attendant Service Issues

- Ensure attendants have not travelled to an affected area or outside of Canada in the last 14 days.
- Send home attendants who are not well.
- Ask attendants to wash their hands when they arrive and before they provide any care.
- Be sure your attendants and you wash your hands after all care.
- Have a back-up plan if your attendant does not come to work or is sick.
- In case you need to go into self-isolation, read this article from Public Health

Ontario regarding caregivers:

<https://www.publichealthontario.ca/-/media/documents/ncov/factsheet-covid-19-guide-isolation-caregivers.pdf?la=en>

If you are sick, or think you might have COVID-19

- Isolate yourself at home if you develop symptoms; read this article from The Globe and Mail for information on symptoms:

<https://www.theglobeandmail.com/canada/article-i-think-i-may-have-the-new-coronavirus-what-should-i-do/>

- Call your local public health authority for advice.
- Contact your family doctor; call them before you visit to let them know you are unwell.

If you are a tetraplegic and use a ventilator or cough assist device, check this resource: <http://www.canventottawa.ca/>

- Speak to your health care provider or respiratory therapist regarding what precautions you, your family and attendants should take in your home.
- Clean your equipment and replace filters regularly as per your device manual.
- Ensure you have an adequate supply of filters and tubing.

Stay Informed: Check the advice from your local health authority regularly

Additional Resources:

If you need to be admitted to hospital, this guide can help your health care providers manage issues related to your SCI:

<https://www.spinal.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/09/Nurses-Booklet-My-Personal-Care-Booklet-w.-AD.pdf> If you use a CoughAssist device follow these steps (on p. 2) to clean it:

<http://www.ohri.ca/nivam/documents/Cough%20Assist%20E70%20Clinician-Client%20worksheet%20Version%201.6-Eng-Uploaded%2026Oct16.pdf>