

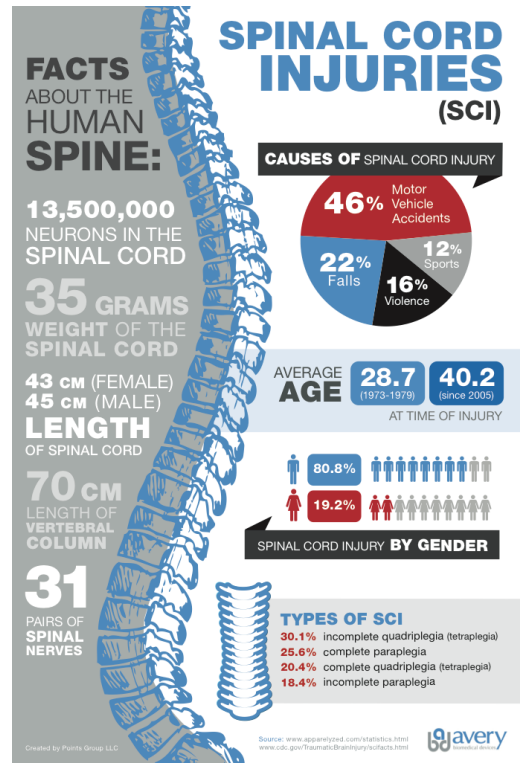
# UNDERSTANDING SPINAL CORD INJURY



The spinal cord controls communication between the brain and the body. A spinal cord injury is any damage to the spinal cord that affects this communication between the body and the brain.

No two spinal cord injuries are the same, and even injuries that seem similar or affect similar areas might lead to completely different outcomes for the survivors.

In general, the higher the injury occurs on the spinal cord, the greater impact the injury will have in impacting the body. It is also important to know if the injury is defined as complete or incomplete. A complete injury is one where there is no movement or sensation below the point of injury. An incomplete injury involves some sensory or motor function below the point of injury.



## WHAT ARE THE EFFECTS A SPINAL CORD INJURY TYPICALLY CAUSES?

The most common questions following a spinal cord injury involve the nature of what functions have been lost, and if/when they might return.

Despite all that we know about these injuries, it can still be difficult to make firm predictions, and it is vital to remember that no two injuries are the same. The recovery of one individual will not necessarily be your recovery, and vice versa.

There are some effects that are standard with an SCI, still dependent on the type of injury and where on the spinal cord it occurred.

### Possible Effects of Spinal Cord Injuries

- Loss of Movement - Can involve arms, hands, trunk and/or legs
- Loss of Sensation
- Loss of Bowel/Bladder Control
- Spasms and Other Reflex Actions
- Changes in Sexual Function; Sexual Sensitivity and Fertility
- Pain or Intense Stinging Sensations

**It is not about what you lost -  
It is about how you use what you have left!**

# ADVOCATE FOR YOURSELF: QUESTIONS YOU CAN ASK ABOUT YOUR RECOVERY



No two injuries are the same, but there are still some questions that you can ask no matter what your injury involves.

**What complications are common with my injury, and what can I do to prevent them?**

**What is the goal of rehabilitation therapy, and what can I truly expect?**

**Were there other injuries that occurred in addition to my spinal cord injury?**

## Self-Advocacy Is Important!

**Ask questions, and seek clarification whenever you do not fully understand.**

**What are the next steps, and how will I know when I am ready for it?**

## THE PART OF THE SPINAL CORD INJURED DETERMINES IS AFFECT ON THE BODY

### Cervical Nerve Injury (C1-C8)

- Patient may not be able to breathe on their own; or control bowel/bladder
- Paralysis in arms, hands, trunk and legs
- Requires complete assistance with ADLs (Activities of Daily Living) and 24-hour personal care

### Thoracic Nerve Injury

- Arm and hand function is usually normal; legs and trunk are affected
- No control of bowel/bladder
- Most likely can use a manual wheelchair and drive a modified car.

### Lumbar Nerve Injury

- Typically lead to some impact on hips and legs
- Limited or no control of bowel/bladder
- May need a wheelchair, but may be able to walk with braces

### Sacral Nerve Injury

- Some loss of function in hips and legs
- Limited or no control of bowel/bladder
- Most likely will be able to walk

