

Spinal Cord Injury (SCI) Pain

Pain :

- ◆ Is **VERY REAL**.
- ◆ Is not to be ignored.
- ◆ May occur in areas of normal sensation as well as in parts of the body where there is little or no feeling after injury.
- ◆ Has an impact on activities of daily living and overall quality of life.

Does Pain Affect You?

Almost every person who has a spinal cord injury suffers from some form of chronic pain. According to some reports, as many as 90% of persons with SCI have had chronic pain. In each person, the pain varies in intensity, frequency, duration of episodes, and the type of pain experienced.

Chronic SCI (central neuropathic pain) may begin at the time of injury or develop slowly over months or years. SCI pain persists for long periods of time and often does not respond well to the currently available pain treatments. This pain can be at its best annoying, and at its worst is unbearable. Pain can interfere with work and social activities as much, or more, than the functional loss. In fact, as many as 37% of people with SCI pain would trade bladder, bowel, or sexual function for pain relief if given the choice.

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What Causes Chronic Pain Following SCI?

It is unlikely that any one mechanism is solely responsible for the onset of chronic pain following SCI. Musculoskeletal pain often results from overuse of tissues in the body, such as bones, joints, and muscles. It often becomes worse with movement, and eases with rest. This pain usually will respond to existing pain treatments, such as narcotics and NSAIDS, and will often go away when the body heals or when the primary problems (such as instability) are removed.

Many types of chronic SCI pain are due to abnormal processing of pain and of normal sensations. Pain due to this phenomenon is termed central neuropathic pain. It can occur at the level of injury or diffusely below the level of injury. It tends to be unrelated to position or activity, and often worsens with infections. Central SCI pain may be very difficult to relieve or cure. The response to current pain treatments are often limited by side effects.

Our research aims to target the specific mechanism believed to cause chronic SCI pain. Our studies examine new drugs that hopefully reduce chronic SCI pain with fewer side effects and better analgesia than currently available medications.

Do You Have Neuropathic Pain?

These are the most commonly reported descriptors of central neuropathic pain:

- Pain in areas of your body where there may be no skin sensation.
- Tingling or “pins and needles.”
- Pain brought on by lightly touching the skin.
- Pain that is present when you are lying down at rest.
- Intense pain brought on by a stimulus that should only cause mild pain, such as a pinch or pin prick.
- Spontaneous and intermittent shooting/stabbing pain.
- Burning pain.
- Cold pain.
- Aching, throbbing, or cramping pain.
- Tightness or constricting pain

Other SCI Resources

NINDS Spinal Cord Injury Information Page
www.ninds.nih.gov/disorders/sci/sci.htm

Christopher Reeve Paralysis Foundation
www.christopherreeve.org

National Spinal Cord Injury Association
www.spinalcord.org

Paralyzed Veterans of America
www.pva.org

Transverse Myelitis Association
www.myelitis.org

Spinal Cord Injury Resource Center
www.spinalinjury.net

National Spinal Cord Injury Hotline
(800) 526-3456

Spinal Cord Injury Information Network
www.spinalcord.uab.edu

Spinal Cord Injury and Disease Resources
www.makoa.org/sci.htm

Americans With Disabilities Act
www.ada.gov

About Our Research

We bring new drugs to people with chronic pain

Our **mission** is to alleviate, if not abolish, all types of pain.

Our **overall goal** is to relieve each person's subjective report of his or her pain, which we hope will ultimately improve quality of life.

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THE TRANSLATIONAL PAIN RESEARCH GROUP

Testing
New
Drugs for
Pain
Following
Spinal
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Injury
(SCI)



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