

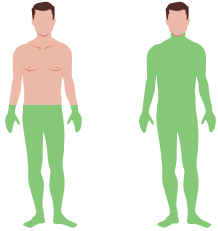
SPINAL CORD INJURY ASSESSMENT AND TREATMENT



Degree of Injury

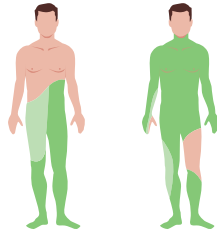
Complete spinal cord injury

A total loss of feeling and motion below the injury site



Incomplete spinal cord injury

There could be some sensation or motion below the injury.



Degree of impairment depends on the level of the injury. Generally, the higher the injury in the spinal column, the greater the loss of function.

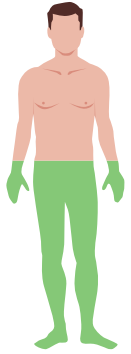
Tetraplegia: paralysis of all 4 extremities, occurs from cervical SCIs

- C4 or higher paralysis of all limbs and trunk



Paraplegia: paralysis of the legs, occurs from thoracic, lumbar, or sacral SCIs

- T6 paralysis below the chest
- L1 paralysis below the waist



Nursing Care Priorities

- Spinal cord immobilization to prevent further injury
- Assessment and stabilization of airway, breathing, and circulation
- Complete neurological assessment using ASIA grading scale
- Prevent and promptly treat infection and other complications.
- Provide client education and support psychological adjustment.

Assessing Spinal Cord Injuries

Clients with a suspected SCI should be thoroughly examined using a validated assessment tool, such as the International Standards for Neurological Classification of Spinal Cord Injury from the American Spinal Injury Association (ASIA) examination.

ASIA Impairment Scale

A	Complete	No sensory or motor function is preserved in the sacral segments.
B	Incomplete	Sensory function, but not motor function, is preserved below neurological level and extends through sacral segments S4–S5.
C	Incomplete	Motor function is preserved below the neurologic level, and most key muscles below the neurologic level have a muscle grade of less than 3.
D	Incomplete	Motor function is preserved below the neurologic level, and most key muscles below the neurologic level have a muscle grade that is greater than or equal to 3.
E	Incomplete	Sensory and motor functions are normal.

Client Education



Teach client how to complete ADLs given new limitations.



SCI can have profound, life-changing implications. Consider client's psychosocial, emotional, and financial needs. Client's team will include PT, OT, and social work.



Client and family may need additional information on bowel and bladder functioning, sexual health, skin care, pain management, and risk for mental health concerns.



Connect client w/ home health care and rehabilitation services prior to discharge.

NOTES

