



Living with Spinal Cord Injury

Dr. Adrian Cristian

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About 40% of all people with spinal cord injuries are now over the age of forty-five, and 25% have had their injury for twenty years or more. We now live at a time when medical advances have made it possible for those with spinal cord injuries to live an essentially normal life span, and to lead full, meaningful, and productive lives. As is true for their friends and colleagues, they work, raise families, and compete in sports.

The wear and tear associated with aging and SCI means that these individuals must deal with the fact that the effects of normal aging are superimposed on those of the spinal cord injury, and activities that once might have been easy in many cases become increasingly difficult. Perhaps pushing a wheelchair up a hill or transferring in and out of a car is more challenging than it once was. Heart disease, pneumonia, urinary tract infections, and pressure sores are common health ailments specific to those with SCI declining financial resources and aging caregivers are common social problems.

This is the definitive guide to dealing with the major challenges faced by those with spinal cord injuries, as related to health, finances, and their social support system. It is primarily designed to identify medical and nonmedical problems that individuals may face as they live with SCI for a number of years. Medical issues are considered by body system and include discussions of the cardiovascular system, the respiratory system, the gastrointestinal system, the urinary system, the musculoskeletal system, the skin, and psychological issues.

Following these discussions of common medical issues related to SCI is a section that deals with mobility and transportation issues, including wheelchairs, the selection of vans and minivans, and the usefulness of a fresh look at rehabilitation issues. A section on managing finances includes a chapter on dealing with home health attendants while appendices provide information for caregivers, a glossary of commonly used terms in SCI, and a helpful list of resources. A wealth of practical advice by other people with spinal cord injuries as well as experts in the field has also been provided to help tackle the daily challenges faced by those with SCI.

This book will bring a better quality of life to the reader living with SCI. Through vigilance and planning, a person with spinal cord injury can age gracefully and have a good quality of life for many years.

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