

# 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 living 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 soap and warm 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 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>

***Note and Disclaimer:*** This guidance was created by experts in the Canadian SCI Community on March 12 2020 in consultation with infectious disease specialists, and is based on the best available evidence at the time of release. The pandemic is changing daily, so review local public health information on a regular basis to ensure you are well informed about how to take care of your health.