

Patient Education Questions

1/21/15

1) What are the different kinds of beds available for Spinal Cord Injured (SCI) patients and how do they protect my skin?

- There are several options regarding beds. The options range from the basic Pro-Care mattress to the Dolphin air mattress with several options in between. In addition, it is possible to have a non-medical bed approved for use. Discuss the option with your care team.

2) What is the Exo-Skeleton and who gets to use it?

- The exo-skeleton is a mechanical device that allows patients to stand and “walk.”
- There are several makes and models.
- Please contact Occupational and/or Physical Therapy for an evaluation of your suitability for this program.

3) How can I get help for my drug and alcohol problems?

- The VA offers programs to address addiction and substance abuse.
- The options range from in house counseling and therapy to Telehealth program.
- Work with your care team to determine the best option for you.

4) How can I improve my memory?

- Memory fitness to help counter age related memory loss

- The first thing to do is have an assessment done by a therapist here at the VA. This will help to determine the nature and severity of your memory issues
- Once an assessment is completed the best therapy for your condition can be identified. This might be a computer based system of games or more intensive involving a therapist.
- Discuss this issue with your care team to determine the best plan for you.

5) What are the benefits of joining the Paralyzed Veterans of America (PVA) and how do I do that?

- The PVA provides extensive legislative support to the SCI community
- The PVA acts as a strong advocate for the community and for the individual SCI patient
- If you wish to join contact any of the on-site representatives

6) Can someone tell me about Assistive Technology and what is currently available for SCI veterans to improve quality of life?

- Assistive technology (AT) means using a device that will improve functional capabilities of persons with disabilities. It can range from a simple item like a typing aid and reacher to more complex systems like speech recognition software or a power wheelchair. Occupational, Physical, and Speech therapists use different types of assistive technology.
- The SCI Assistive Technology Lab here specializes in computer access, access to mobile devices, and environmental controls within the home. An environmental control unit (ECU) enables a person who doesn't have arm or hand function to control TV,

lights, phones, electric beds using a switch or their voice. There must be a medically adaptive need to be eligible for equipment from Prosthetics. A person in a wheelchair or bedbound does not automatically qualify to get a device. Please talk with OT if you have a question, or request a consult from your doctor for an OT evaluation.

7) Can someone explain the SCI Hub and Spoke Program and can I get my next annual evaluation at my nearest spoke site?

- The annual needs to be done at a hub site; however, it is possible to do some of the preliminary work up at your local Community Based Outpatient Clinic (CBOC).

8) Who is eligible for the SCI Home Care Program and what services are provided?

- The transition from acute rehabilitation to the home environment can be complicated and difficult for many patients.
- Patients with chronic conditions or uncertain living arrangements are eligible for Health care (HC).
- Please coordinate through your care team with the HC team to determine your individual eligibility.

9) What are the pros and cons of having colostomy surgery and what is involved in caring for my colostomy after surgery?

- Colostomy surgery can offer an alternative to a “normal” bowel care program. In addition, colostomy surgery can be utilized to provide temporary assistance with chronic wounds by keeping the area of the wound clean.
- The surgery can be either permanent or temporary.

10) I want to get an adapted bicycle to use in my local community. What is the process to get evaluated and obtain one? Is there any cost?

- Evaluation will be done by Rec Therapy.
- A loaner bike will be provided along with an activity log to determine if the bike will be used.
- Proof of storage
- Proof of independent usage or use with minimal assistance
- Independent transportation
- If everything is ok a bike can be provided at little or no cost to the Veteran.

11) Can anyone recommend any SCI web chat rooms or forums that are good?

- SCI U on the VAPA Web
- University of Alabama Birmingham
- Christopher Reeve Foundation
- Valley Medical