

SCI Patient Education Q&A

12/17/2014

- 1. How do I manage my power wheelchair in heavy rain? I'm worried it will get ruined.**
 - a. Cover electronic controls (joystick) with plastic to keep out the water and drape something waterproof over the back to the PC. Water and electronics do not mix.

- 2. Why does the pharmacy at the VA only come once a day and only provide one item rather than a full week supply of my necessary meds i.e. enemeze.**
 - a. The computerized pharmacy only supplies medications for a 24 hour period. This is the manner in which the system was designed and it can't be changed. If medications are changed the pharmacy will deliver the new meds as required. One of the goals of the pharmacy system was to keep the number of medications on the unit floor to a minimum. If the meds are not needed that day the pharmacy will withhold the meds until they are required.

- 3. Why do I have to ICP three times during the night?**
 - a. This is an issue with fluid intake management. In order to reduce the need to empty your bladder during the night the intake of liquids should be weighted towards the morning and taper off throughout the day. Prior to bedtime intake should be zero.
 - b. If a patient spends most of his/her day sitting in their WC fluid will accumulate in the legs. Therefore, elevating the legs for 30-60 minutes in the afternoon will allow the fluid to be redistributed and processed by the kidneys and bladder. This will help reduce fluid overload during the evening hours.

- 4. Why do patient's need to use a ventilator for breathing and how does it relate to being spinal cord injured? Can they ever get off of a ventilator?**
 - a. Injuries to the area C3-C5 result in a decrease in diaphragm control. This necessitates the use of a ventilator to assist in breathing. Over time some patients can be gradually weaned off the ventilator. This is an issue to be discussed with your providers.

- b. In the case of an acute medical condition patients are often placed on a ventilator for a short period of time. Once the medical issue is resolved the patient can be weaned off.
- 5. How does everyone else manage their personal care every day? There are a lot of things to do (ADL's, cathing, etc.) and I'm finding it difficult to keep up and on track.**
- a. White boards have posted schedules which can help manage daily care routines.
 - b. Ask nursing for Activities of Daily living help and guidance to build up a steady routine.
- 6. What are the VA resources that can help me cut back on smoking and drinking and even quit? Is drinking more harmful to me as a spinal cord injured person?**
- a. The VA pioneered smoking cessation programs. There are several programs designed to assist Veterans in kicking the smoking habit. In addition, there are a number of medical treatments that can assist with the effort. VA offers a variety of interventions to help reduce or quit drinking as well. No one program fits everybody, but there is an effective program for everyone who wants to change. Discuss these issues with your provider to decide what the best plan is for you.
 - b. Drinking alcohol increases urine output. This can cause changes in blood pressure and even dehydration. People with SCI are more susceptible to these problems. Alcohol consumption is a major contributor to falls – both when walking and when riding wheelchairs. People with SCI are also prone to sleep disorders. Alcohol consumption may make it easier to initiate sleep, but it disrupts the normal sleep cycle, causing people to wake briefly during the night and feel less rested when they wake up.
- 7. My friend's want to come out and visit me but hotels are really expensive. Can they stay in the defenders lodge? How much is it? If not, why?**
- a. During the work week Veterans receiving treatment at PAD are given priority over family and friends. Therefore, securing accommodation during the week will be problematic.
 - b. During the weekends it is possible to book a room at the lodge. Contact your SW for advice and assistance with the process.
- 8. What happened to the music channels on the TV in patient rooms? I use that station for my nightly relaxation exercises and it has been shut off the last few days.**
- a. There was a temporary disruption in service. The music channel is now available.

9. What is the current progress of stem cell research for getting return of function?

- a. This is on the cutting edge of medical research. Presently, there is insufficient information available to determine the efficacy of stem cell therapies in the treatment of SCI. Discuss this issue with your care team to get the latest news.
- b. There have been a few studies that showed small improvements in sensation and strength but not in return of function.