



SCI: MOVING FORWARD

A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

SCI-Specific Health Concerns Amid COVID-19 Crisis

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PRESENTED BY:



North American
Spinal Cord Injury
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About NASCIC

The North American Spinal Cord Injury Consortium (NASCIC) has the mission to bring about unified achievements in research, care, cure, and policy by supporting collaborative efforts across the spinal cord injury community.

About SCI: Moving Forward

- Webinar series in response to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it is affecting the SCI population
- Website to house archived webinars and additional resources

<http://www.nasciconsortium.org/scimovingforward.com/>

SCI: Moving Forward

Upcoming Webinar Topics

- Isolation and Mental Wellness
- SCI Nutrition 101
- SCI Adapted Exercise
- Self Advocacy, Resiliency, and System Change
- SCI: Moving Forward
- SCI: Moving Forward (Latinx Community)
- Webinar Series Takeaways - Where do we go from here?



Dr. Chester Ho

Dr. Chester Ho is a Professor and Division Director of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, Endowed Chair of Spinal Cord Injury Research at the University of Alberta; and Alberta Health Services (AHS) Edmonton Zone Section Chief of Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation, and AHS Senior Medical Director for the Neurosciences, Rehabilitation & Vision Strategic Clinical Network.

Dr. Ho graduated from the Clinical School at the University of Cambridge in UK, before moving to the United States where he completed his residency in Physical Medicine & Rehabilitation at the Harvard Medical School/Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital, and fellowship in Spinal Cord Injury Medicine at the Kessler Institute for Rehabilitation/University of Medicine & Dentistry New Jersey.

Dr. Ho has a special clinical and research interest in the rehabilitation of persons with spinal cord injury, specifically, on the health services delivery of persons with spinal cord injury, as well as the management and rehabilitation of complications following spinal cord injury, such as pressure injuries and use of functional electrical stimulation. He is particularly interested in the integration of research into clinical practice, and has numerous peer-reviewed articles and book chapters on pressure injuries. He co-authored the Wounds Canada Best Practice Recommendations for the Prevention and Management of Pressure Injuries, as well as the Consortium of Spinal Cord Medicine Clinical Practice Guidelines on Pressure Ulcer Prevention and Treatment Following Spinal Cord Injury, 2nd edition.

In addition to his academic pursuit, Dr. Ho also holds a number of provincial and national leadership positions. He believes that the combination of his clinical, research and administrative positions will have good alignment to create positive impact on patient care and experience.

Screening Caregivers and PPE Use

- Unfortunately right now we don't know how contagious carriers who don't present symptoms are
- The reason caregivers should consider wearing PPE, especially a mask is so they are prevented from touching their face
- It is important to keep your caregiver healthy since you might not have a substitute caregiver in place

Q: If you are self-managing your care, where can you find information on PPE and proper use?

- There are many guides and video's online that show how to properly put on and take off PPE and guides on how to properly wash your hands
- United Kingdom National Health Service (NHS)
 - https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-GncQ_ed-9w

Public Health England

COVID-19

Putting on (donning) personal protective equipment (PPE) for aerosol generating procedures (AGPs) – Gown version

Use safe work practices to protect yourself and limit the spread of infection

- keep hands away from face and PPE being worn
- change gloves when torn or heavily contaminated
- limit surfaces touched in the patient environment
- regularly perform hand hygiene
- always clean hands after removing gloves


Pre-donning instructions

- ensure healthcare worker hydrated
- tie hair back
- remove jewellery
- check PPE in the correct size is available

Putting on personal protective equipment (PPE). The order for putting on is gown, respirator, eye protection and gloves. This is undertaken outside the patient's room.

Perform hand hygiene before putting on PPE


1 Put on the long-sleeved fluid repellent disposable gown - fasten neck ties and waist ties.



2 Respirator.
Note: this must be the respirator that you have been fit tested to use. Where goggles or safety spectacles are to be worn with the respirator, these must be worn during the fit test to ensure

Position the upper straps on the crown of your head, above the ears and the lower strap at the nape of the neck. Ensure that the respirator is flat against your cheeks. With both hands mould the nose piece from the bridge of the nose firmly pressing down both sides of the nose with your fingers until you have a good facial fit. If a good fit cannot be achieved **DO NOT PROCEED**

Perform a fit check. The technique for this will differ between different makes of respirator. Instructions for the correct technique are provided by manufacturers



HAND HYGIENE FOR PEOPLE WITH SPINAL CORD INJURY

PREVENTING COVID-19


This advice is meant to address the COVID-19 pandemic. Certain supplies may be limited but you can still protect yourself and prevent infection using whatever is available to you; soap and water is always better than nothing.

Hand Hygiene Basics

1

- Soap and warm water: 20 seconds, all parts of hand (front & back, under nails, between fingers, wrists), or
- Sanitizer (70% alcohol): cover all parts of hand (front & back, under nails, between fingers, wrists).
- Take care when you dry your hands; use single-use paper towels in a public place or a clean towel at home.

The coronavirus (that causes COVID-19) can live for hours or even days on a variety of materials; be especially careful of surfaces in public areas that are touched by many people (elevator/door buttons, PIN pads, handrails, touchscreens, etc.)



Respiratory Concerns

As someone with an SCI, is my risk for contracting COVID-19 higher?

- The risk of contracting COVID-19 has no relation to comorbidities and in fact high level quadriplegics could be at a lower risk because they can't physically touch their face, which is how COVID-19 is primarily spread
- Like everyone else you have to take precautions which include:
 - physical distancing
 - Frequently washing your hands
 - Avoiding touching your face
 - Making sure your caregivers are also diligently washing their hands and not touching their face and your face (caregivers should be washing their hands before and after coming in contact with you)
 - Careful cleaning of common surfaces, especially those your caregiver touches i.e. wheelchair
- For those on BiPAP, invasively ventilated and frequently suctioned, require cough assist or other breathing apparatuses you need to take extra precautions
- Caregivers should use PPE when coming into contact with you i.e. mask, gloves and eye protection

If I contract COVID-19 am I at a higher risk for developing severe symptoms?

- Anyone who has a significant health issue is at a higher risk for complications if COVID-19 is contracted, however it's a difficult question to answer since the majority of the population regardless of their health will present mild symptoms
- Those with pre-existing conditions, like a spinal cord injury should consider taking different precautions such as:
 - keeping in contact with your healthcare team (family doctor, respiratory doctor, pharmacist, caregiver etc.)
 - Having your caregivers properly use and dispose of PPE
 - Carefully cleaning equipment
 - Putting a plan in place for supplemental care
 - Documenting your wishes in regards to hospitalization and extreme measures
 - Determining a healthcare advocate if you are unable to advocate for yourself
 - Having all medical documents at hand – consider posting copies on your fridge

Risk of Wound Care

Catheter Use and Risk of UTI

If you are experiencing mild COVID-like symptoms, what should you do?

1. Take an online self-assessment if available to you - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/self-assessment/>
2. Contact your healthcare team i.e. family doctor, respirologist, homecare case manager etc. for further consultation
3. Call an assessment centre to see if you need to get tested - <https://covid-19.ontario.ca/assessment-centre-locations/>
4. The best determinant for seeking further medical assistance is your oxygen level, consider purchasing an oximeter which is easily available at drug stores or big box stores like Walmart
5. Make sure your caregivers are wearing PPE when in the home and are following proper protocol for putting on and disposing of PPE
6. If you are experiencing mild symptoms consider the following:
 - Take Tylenol for fever and muscle aches
 - Stretch throughout the day
 - Stay warm and stay hydrated
 - Use an inhaler if you have one
 - If you use a BiPAP or ventilator for nighttime consider using it more frequently

If your symptoms become more severe, what should you do?

- For individuals who already have a significant health issue such as a spinal cord injury, it is best to try and recover from home as there is a higher risk of the virus getting worse once in hospital
- Consult with your healthcare team before making the decision to go to the hospital
- You might only require supplemental oxygen, which can be easily brought into the home
- If you already rely on aerosol generating procedures and you are feeling breathless your settings might have to be adjusted, which can be done in the home by a caregiver or remotely for some BiPAP machines
- If you do decide to go to the hospital and already rely on a caregiver, make a request to the hospital to have them come with you
- Have a written plan of your wishes in regards to extreme measures and make a copy for your caregiver/health advocate

Self-Advocacy

Questions & Answers

