

Useful Resources

The American Urological Association

www.auanet.org
1.866.RING AUA
(1.866.746.4282)

Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation

www.crfp.org
1.800.225.0292

The Buoniconti Fund to Cure Paralysis

www.thebuonicontifund.com
1.888.STANDUP (782.6387)

The Miami Project to Cure Paralysis

www.miamiproject.miami.edu
1.800.STANDUP (782.6387)

National Association for Continence (NAFC)

www.nafc.org
1.800.BLADDER (252.3337)

National Rehabilitation Information Center

www.naric.com
1.800.346.2742

National Spinal Cord Injury Association

www.spinalcord.org
1.800.913.6370

Paralyzed Veterans of America

www.pva.org
1.800.555.9140

The Simon Foundation for Continence

www.simonfoundation.org
1.800.23SIMON (237.4666)

Spina Bifida Association

www.sbaa.org
1.800.621.3141

Spinal Cord Injury Information Network

www.spinalcord.uab.edu
1.205.934.3283

Us Too International, Inc.

www.ustoo.org
1.800.80.USTOO
(1.800.808.7866)



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Hollister Continence Care

Living Your Life
Sports and Fitness



Information for people living with
mobility issues and bladder dysfunction

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If you worked hard to keep fit before your spinal cord injury (SCI), you will find that there are still many ways to stay active. Sports and fitness can still be a big part of your life.

Depending on your interests and capabilities, there are many activities to choose from. These include basketball, rugby, fencing, rowing, sailing, swimming, curling, and more. Individually, as a pair, or in a team, only for enjoyment or as a competitive sport, traditional sports or more daring — many sports are available for those with disabilities. At the World Paralympics in Beijing, 4,000 handicapped athletes from 125 countries came to compete in more than 20 kinds of sports.

You may feel healthier in many ways when you enjoy physical activity. Besides making a valuable contribution to your health and rehabilitation, new people and expanded experiences may come your way.

“Engaging in sports is much more than just heart rate and muscle-building. Sports are a way to self-awareness, a way back into society, a way to interact with one’s friends, and a way to build self-confidence. Sports are a key to mastery of one’s life. And whoever masters sports can manage everything else as well!”

Steven K.



Exercise: The best medicine

People with limited motor function may be able to train their other abilities to compensate. That way, they may be able to maximize their overall ability. No muscle will take over additional functions and grow if it has not been trained to do so. This is especially true for the upper limbs and torso of people who are in wheelchairs.

Many people with paraplegia have a so-called spinal spasticity effect. This spastic activity may diminish if you are physically active.

Staying active also may help improve your circulation. Moving your body may lead to better circulation in the skin and help prevent the formation of pressure ulcers (decubitus).

Exercising benefits more than just the physical side of your health. The positive mental effects should not be underestimated. Participating in physical activity may create a sense of achievement and a sense of community that will motivate you and encourage self-confidence.



Activities for People with Spinal Cord Injuries

An activity on wheels will give you speed and mobility. You can take up one of these activities just for fun, or you can engage in some serious competition.

Wheelchair handbikes



Handbikes are a favorite among people who like to race and move fast. Like a bicycle in many ways, a handbike is driven with your arms using hand cranks.

One of two types of handbikes adapts to a wheelchair; it is suitable for pure leisure and everyday use. The adaptive handbike consists of a handlebar on a bicycle setup which is easily mounted onto any normal wheelchair. The small wheels of the wheelchair remain in the air.

The second type is the racing bike. This is a complete vehicle including a seat and/or surface for reclining. If you want to train professionally and even be a racer, this is the best choice for you. For athletes who are ambitious and want to measure their performance against others, there are many races and marathons to choose from.

Regardless of whether you want to enjoy nature undisturbed, or want to share your experience with a handbike group, consider giving it a try.

“When handbiking, I am especially fascinated by the speed which one can achieve. In addition, I enjoy the ride in the fresh air. Because the bike is at home, I can start my ride when I like. This sport is particularly great to strengthen the upper body.”

Jeff T.

Fast wheelchair racing

This demanding activity uses special equipment, the fast wheelchair.

The fast wheelchair uses a smaller front wheel and two larger back wheels to which grip rings are attached, a “cage” (that is the seat), and a steering mechanism. This device is only driven with a special turning technique, without gearing and changing gears.

Fast wheelchair racing is related to track sports. Like the non-handicapped sports, it uses track regulations of 100 meters to 10,000 meters and road race distances of half marathons and marathons. This traditional wheelchair sport has a long history at the Paralympics.

Wheelchair basketball

If you are looking for a team sport, try wheelchair basketball. In this game, two teams of five players each try to make as many baskets (and points) as possible. The rules are taken from basketball, with the exception that dribbling is treated differently. A special wheelchair with a large frame and slanted wheels is recommended for the game.

In wheelchair basketball, each player receives a given number of points relating to his or her individual limitations. This functional classification system helps balance teams, so everyone is on a “level playing field.”

“My number one sport is wheelchair basketball! I go twice a week to training — and what I learn there I can also use every day. I especially like this sport because it has to do with more than strength. One also needs a tactical understanding and team spirit in order to be successful.”

Alan R.



Wheelchair rugby

A sport which is specially designed for tetraplegics is wheelchair rugby, which can be compared to an “unplugged” bumper car platform for wheelchair drivers. One thing is clear about this action-packed sport: it is not for the timid! Barge, brake, block! To get at the ball or to clear the way for a teammate, almost everything, other than direct physical contact, is allowed.

The game is played with a volleyball on a basketball court. The goal is to rack up points by crossing the goal line of the opposing team with the ball and both wheels of the wheelchair. Teams consist of four players, and time limits guarantee a fast pace. Because tactics are crucial for success, this sport is often compared to chess.

As with wheelchair basketball, the classification system assures that equally-strong teams play against one another. The required rugby wheelchair is stable and is designed to maneuver easily in this fast and exciting game.

“On the one hand, one can do everything that isn’t allowed on the highway ... out-brake others and jostle people; on the other hand a high degree of concentration is required. Because not the strongest, but the most clever, wins.”

Jeff T.

Sledge hockey

Sometimes referred to as “sled hockey,” this sport is comparable to ice or field hockey. Players sit in sleds with two skate blades underneath that allow the puck to pass through. Players then propel themselves across the ice using two short hockey sticks with ice picks on the bottom.

Teams consist of a goalie, three forwards, and two defensemen who are classified according to ability. The ice, goal net, and pucks are all the same as standard hockey. Protective hockey gear is required as the games are action packed.



Explore Unusual Places and Ways to be Active

For more excitement, you can find yourself under water or high in the air with these activities.

Diving

With diving, you have a chance to experience mobility in a new dimension — the fascinating world under water. Since you are weightless in water, you may be able to use muscles that cannot move on land.

In addition, diving is a partner sport. This means disabled and non-disabled people can work together as a team.

“Since I dove for the first time today, I was very nervous at first. After a few minutes it became exactly the opposite: my body felt great. The tension and always-present back pains were forgotten. I could forget this physical tension and let go. It was like a beautiful, weightless world.”

A participant in a first amateur diving day

Wheelchair dancing

If you think you need feet for dancing, you have not discovered wheelchair dancing. You may feel like fireworks on wheels with mood, hot rhythms, and a lot of emotion along with the right physical movements.

There are several ways to enjoy this elegant sport. Combi-dancing is when a disabled and non-disabled partner dance together. Duo-dancing is when two people with disabilities dance together. And, in formation dancing, there are always several pairs in a joint choreography. These pairs can be combi- or duo-dancers.

With wheelchair dancing, you can take pleasure in moving to music. Grace and a rhythmic feel are beneficial, but not required. You can participate at any level you desire – just for fun, as part of a competition, or even as part of a show.

Airborne

If you want to view the world from above, you may find happiness in aerial sports and may even acquire a pilot's license. In addition to soaring, ultra light and powered flight, hang-gliding, or paragliding are now available. Limited body functions are compensated for by changing and adding special equipment in the aircraft as well as appropriate operating procedures.

“Many things fascinate me about flying: the technology, free movement in three dimensions, the experience of the landscape and weather, working within the large flying organizations, working with people who are enthusiastic about the same things.”

David L.

And more!

Downhill racing is a new trend. In this sport, one crosses through the countryside in specially-made Canadian mountain bikes with four wheels. A combination of downhill mountain bike, rally car, and motocross – it is not for the faint of heart!

In addition, go-karts for people with disabilities are becoming popular. Karting is offered either as an outdoor or an indoor sport. Just for fun, or for those with ambitions to be professional racing drivers — you can determine the level at which you want to pursue the sport.

The Right Thing for Everyone

Besides the sports discussed here, there are many, many other offerings in sports for the disabled. You could try table tennis, badminton, tennis, weightlifting, fencing, golf or skiing.

The opportunities to practice sports are nearly unlimited, even for people with physical limitations. Take a little time to learn about what is available for you.

Get fit, and have fun!

