



# Spinal Cord Injury Prevention Tips

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Every year, an estimated 11,000 spinal cord injury (SCI) accidents occur in the United States. Motor vehicles are the leading cause of SCI in the United States for people age 65 and younger, while falls are the leading cause of SCI for people 65 and older. Sports and recreation-related SCI injuries primarily affect people under age 29. SCI prevention is essential to addressing this major public health concern.

## Preventing SCI

### Biking prevention tips

While many cycling injuries are head injuries, the proper usage of SNELL, ANSI or ASTM-approved helmets can also help prevent SCI injuries. It is essential that the helmet fit properly so that it doesn't fall off during a fall. Other SCI cycling prevention tips include:

- Children under age 1 should not be carried on a bicycle, because their necks are not strong enough to withstand a helmet on their heads.
- Bike a minimum of three feet from parked cars, in case a door swings open.
- Do not wear headphones.
- Obey local traffic regulations at all times and signal your turns.
- Never grab onto a moving vehicle to get a "free" ride.

### Skateboarding/in-line skating prevention tips

- Inspect your skateboard or skates for any damaged parts and replace them before using again.
- Wear a helmet, fastened securely to your head, every time you skateboard or skate.
- Check the area for rocks, debris, cracks in the pavement or uneven surfaces.
- Wear well-fitting clothing, knee and elbow pads, wrist braces, and gloves.

### Swimming/diving prevention tips

- Do not dive in water less than 12 feet deep or in above-ground pools. Check the depth and check for debris in the water before diving.

- Follow all rules and warning signs at water parks, swimming pools, and public beaches.
- The first time you go into a body of water, walk into the water.
- Never push or shove somebody into the water and do not allow your children to do so.

### General sports prevention tips

- Supervise younger children at all times, and do not let them use sporting equipment or play sports unsuitable for their age. Do not let them use playgrounds with hard surface grounds.
- Do not participate in sports when you are ill or very tired.
- Discard and replace sporting equipment or protective gear that is damaged.
- Never block, hit or tackle a player with the top of your football helmet.
- Never slide head-first when stealing a base.

### General prevention tips

- Wear a seatbelt every time you drive or ride in a motor vehicle.
- Never drive while under the influence of drugs or alcohol or ride as a passenger with anybody else who is under the influence.
- Keep firearms unloaded in a locked cabinet or safe, and store ammunition in a separate, secure location.
- Remove hazards in the home that may contribute to falls. Secure rugs and loose electrical cords, put away toys, use safety gates, and install window guards. Install grab bars and handrails if you are frail or elderly.