

# Health behaviors and management critical for spinal cord injury patients

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It can happen in a split second from a vehicle crash, a fall or a gunshot: a person's spinal cord tissue is bruised or torn by a shocking blow.

While often unexpected, it isn't uncommon. According to the National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center, there are approximately 282,000 people currently living with a spinal cord injury in the United States.

"Spinal cord injury significantly alters a person's way of life," says Michelle Meade, Ph.D., associate professor of physical medicine and rehabilitation at the University of Michigan. "Perhaps the most dramatic alteration is the individual's health and the steps they have to take to manage it on a daily basis."

Meade is the co-editor of a two-part series of *Topics in Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation* focused on recent research studies about health behaviors and health management in individuals with spinal cord injury.

The first issue, published this past winter, includes five articles highlighting the health management challenges individuals with spinal cord injury encounter and the strategies they engage in to overcome those obstacles.

Articles include topics around medical cannabis use, strategies for interacting with the health care system, self-care measures, physical health barriers to employment after a spinal cord injury and a new intervention for families.

The second issue, published this spring, includes four articles focusing on the importance of health behaviors in patients with spinal cord injury and the need for management of physical and psychological health in these individuals.

Articles include topics around management of bowel and bladder dysfunction, resilience after a spinal cord injury, impact of psychological health management on employment after a spinal cord injury and self-management programs.

"Both of these journal issues highlight the importance of health behaviors and proactively managing health for people with spinal cord injury," Meade says.

Meade mentions the culmination of these research studies is a way to highlight the need for further research on health management among individuals with [spinal cord injuries](#) and other disabilities.

"We hope these two issues of Topics in Spinal Cord Rehabilitation will inspire our colleagues who work and conduct research with individuals with [spinal cord](#) injuries to continue to address this important topic," she says. "Giving our patients the knowledge and tools to proactively manage their health and improve their quality of life is always a top priority."

Provided by University of Michigan Health System

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