

## Spina Bifida & Sensation



Depending on how much nerve damage you have had, you may have difficulties with sensation which can sometimes, unknowingly, put you in danger. For example you may not:

- be able to feel how hot the bath water is
- notice that you are putting your foot by a hot radiator
- realise that your toes have been squashed in your shoes or
- feel your calliper is rubbing
- notice that your skin is cut or broken or even know if you have a broken a bone.

As you grow up, you need to take special care to check for any cuts or bruises especially on those parts of your body which are most at risk.

### Circulation

You may have poor circulation (the speed with which blood flows around the body) which can cause a problem, especially if you cannot feel or move the lower part of your body as you should. You may not realise:

- when your blood circulation has slowed down
- if your feet or legs are too cold
- or pressure on your bottom or hips has stopped the blood flowing

### Pressure Ulcers / Sores

These are very common among people who have Spina Bifida. It is very important that you check your skin when dressing. The area's most at risk are the:

- buttocks
- thighs
- feet
- elbows
- back

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Things you can do to reduce the risk:

- Push-ups every 15-20 minutes should relieve the pressure on the buttocks.
- If you can't lift up, leaning forward or to the side should provide adequate relief.
- Use the pressure relieving cushion that came with your chair, and if necessary, you may have a pressure relieving mattress on your bed.
- Remember your feet! Shoes (not too tight) should be worn.
- Cotton socks without elasticated ankles.
- Wearing fashionable clothes may be "cool" but try to avoid clothes with zips, press-studs or hard seams.
- Ensure the skin is kept clean and dry but avoid using talc
- If you have a bladder or bowel accident, clean yourself up as soon as you can.
- Lift yourself away from surfaces when transferring - this avoids dragging the skin and damaging it.
- Try not to knock or drag your feet when transferring if you have limited sensation.
- Eat healthily as it keeps your skin in good condition and keeps your weight down
- Remember your fluids too - they help to keep the skin's elasticity.

### Top Tips

- Never rest hot drinks on your lap.
- Don't have your bed next to a radiator.
- Always check your bath water with your hands to make sure it's not too hot.
- Don't rest your feet on radiators/heaters.
- At the first sign of a sore, get it checked. Pressure ulcers can be hard to heal once developed and can lead to prolonged bouts of total bed rest - definitely not good for the social life