

Autonomic Dysreflexia is a condition that commonly affects individuals with a spinal cord injury at or above the level of T6.

It is a condition characterised by sudden, extremely high blood pressure which may be life-threatening.

If there is no response to measures, call Emergency Services on 000 and transfer to hospital via ambulance. Inform medical staff that the person is prone to Autonomic Dysreflexia.

Contact the on-call Spinal Rehabilitation Consultant at the Princess Alexandra Hospital for further specialist advice on (07) 3176 2111.



1300 774 625

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EMERGENCY CARD

Autonomic Dysreflexia

is a MEDICAL EMERGENCY
requiring immediate
attention



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Blood pressure

Following a spinal cord injury, the normal baseline blood pressure reading may be as low as 90/60. Symptoms of Autonomic Dysreflexia may be present at blood pressure readings that would otherwise be considered normal in the general population.



Symptoms

- › Severe, pounding headache
- › Sudden rise in blood pressure
- › Blurred vision or seeing spots
- › Flushing and blotching of skin
- › Sweating
- › Goose bumps below the point of injury
- › Chills without fever
- › Nasal stuffiness
- › Shortness of breath and anxiety
- › Heart palpitations
- › Very slow pulse
- › Tightness in the chest

Measures

- If any symptoms appear, then:
- › Sit the person upright until blood pressure returns to normal
 - › Loosen tight clothing
 - › Monitor blood pressure every five minutes, if possible
 - › Find cause of symptoms and treat if possible (e.g. check catheter drainage and also for recent bowel movements)
 - › Assist person to take prescribed medication for Autonomic Dysreflexia as directed.

Note: DO NOT use glyceryl trinitrate if sildenafil (Viagra) or vardenafil (Levitra) has been taken in the previous 24 hours, or tadalafil (Cialis) in the previous 4 days.