



Spinal Cord Injuries Fact Sheet

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SPINAL CORD INJURIES - INFORMATION SHEET

Each year around 1000 people suffer spinal cord injury in the UK, and most of these injuries occur as a result of road traffic accidents (37% of cases) or falls (42%). Young males are the most likely group to be affected.

At the present time, an estimated 50,000 people are living with some level of paralysis as a result of spinal injury in the UK and Ireland, and there is no known effective cure.

Symptoms of spinal cord injury depend on the severity and location of the damage, but can include partial or complete loss of sensory function or motor control of arms, legs and/or other areas of the body. The most severe spinal cord injury affects the systems that regulate bowel or bladder control, breathing, heart rate and blood pressure. Many people with spinal cord injury experience chronic pain.

After the injury has occurred, it is important to secure access to expert rehabilitation and mental health services, so as to try and improve the general function, independence and overall wellbeing of the individual. This would include access to the latest technology and adaptive devices to mitigate functional limitations and dependency.

Across the UK an estimated 20% of spinal cord injury patients are discharged from hospital without arrangements for adequate care and suitable accommodation being in place. The Major Trauma and Serious Injury team at Horwich Cohen Coghlan always place specific emphasis on rehabilitation pathways at the earliest possible opportunity, and will work to ensure maximal delivery of the Rehabilitation Prescription that NHS Major Trauma Centres issue prior to discharge.

Patients who have suffered spinal cord injury as a result of Major Trauma often feel isolated and overwhelmed during the initial phase of their treatment in hospital, and around 25% of spinal injury patients show clinically significant sign of depression. Our Major Trauma solicitors visit patients are often as is reasonably practicable whilst they are hospital to ensure that they understand the position in relation to the legal process, and to provide as much support as possible during this critical phase of the recovery.

Although there is no effective cure for spinal cord injury at the present time, scientists and the medical profession are always working on ways to improve the position of those affected by this injury. At the present time, experts are working on a robotic exoskeleton suit that responds to the tilting of the body. In the USA a completely paralysed man has been reportedly able to work using an exoskeleton suit. American scientists have also developed a tongue drive system (TDS) that enables computer and wheelchair control for people with spinal cord injuries. This

involves a tongue piercing with a magnetic stud that resembles jewellery, but acts like a joystick.

If you have any queries in relation to spinal injury, please contact one of our Major Trauma and Serious Injury solicitors on 0161 830 4600, or submit an enquiry form via our website.