

# Sexuality & Fertility with SCI

By NSIC Outpatients nurses

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# What is sexuality?



This isn't only about sex

It's about how you feel about yourself as an individual

Having confidence in yourself

How you want others to see you

Your past experiences and how they have influenced you

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## A quote from an ex-patient's wife

“I felt I couldn't talk to him about my problems. What have I got to complain about when he's paralysed? It took us a long time to recognise that this was causing a big gap between us.”

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# Common Sexual Concerns

- Lack of desire ..fatigue, nausea, medication
- Negative self-image
- Issues of low self esteem / confidence
- Failure to manage personal care
- Physical inability
- Fear of hurting self/ Partners fear of hurting
- Inability to negotiate role change  
.. from partner... to carer...to partner again  
and many, many more...

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# How does a spinal cord injury affect your sexual function?



- The brain is no longer able to send messages to the sexual organs as before
- There may be changes in sensation in your genital area
- You may find that other areas of your body become pleasant to touch and be touched
- You will have to experiment to find out what you both like. Have fun!

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# Don't rush!

- If you are not in a relationship, when you meet someone new, be open and honest
- Just be yourself
- When you have the opportunity to be intimate with your partner, give yourselves time to explore and enjoy your bodies
- Kissing, cuddling and touching can give sexual pleasure to both partners

## How to feel better about yourself

- Feel confident with your bladder and bowel routine
- Be comfortable with your appearance, for instance, clothes, hair, make up, shaving
- Have a social life
- Smile!

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# Male Sexual Function

**Psychogenic erections** begin with seeing or hearing something stimulating or arousing

- The brain sends a message down the spine to the nerves that control the sexual organs, producing an erection
- After your injury this may not happen or may be changed

**Reflex erections** occur when there is direct physical contact to the penis or other erotic areas such as the ears, nipples or neck

- A reflex erection is involuntary and can occur without sexually stimulating thoughts
- If your injury is T12 or above you may notice this happening

😊 There is help available for you from Spinal Outpatients or your GP.  
Do ask!

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# Male Fertility

- ❑ Fertility is likely to be affected, as you are unlikely to ejaculate during intercourse as a result of your spinal cord injury
- ❑ This can affect sperm quality and motility
- ❑ Ejaculation can be achieved with penile vibratory stimulation using the Ferticare Personal Vibrator
- ❑ For further advice contact Spinal Outpatients



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# Men's Health

## Remember!

- Keep fit and healthy
- Avoid smoking, excessive alcohol, recreational drugs
- Regular testicular examination
- You can still get sexually transmitted diseases!



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# Female Sexual Function

- You may have noticed changes in sensation in your genital area
- Sexual activity may be difficult due to a decrease in vaginal lubrication, but gels can help with this
- You may need to consider changing your sanitary protection
- Your fertility has not been affected, so if you are sexually active do think about contraception

## How to manage these changes

- Either on your own or with a partner, explore your body to find new areas that may arouse you
- Lubricating gels can be used to reduce any vaginal dryness
- Sanitary pads may be easier to use than tampons
- If contraception is needed, speak to a ward nurse, doctor or make an appointment in Spinal Outpatients

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# What about a family?

## Women's Fertility



- Your spinal cord injury has not affected your fertility
- If you are considering starting a family you may like to speak to your consultant, a specialist nurse in Spinal outpatients or your local GP and midwife
- You can be referred to a Consultant Obstetrician at the National Spinal Injuries Centre who can offer advice

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# Women's Health

## Remember!

- Keep fit and healthy
- Avoid smoking, excessive alcohol and recreational drugs
- Have regular smear tests
- Regularly examine your breasts
- You can still get sexually transmitted diseases



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## A quote from an ex-patient

“ When I sat in the Delivery Room with my new-born son on my lap and his stunningly blue eyes boring into my soul for the first 30 minutes of his life, it was the end of a journey that started in Spinal Out-Patients at Stoke Mandeville.

Thanks to the pioneering work done by my first consultant, the late Brian Gardner, the team there were able to show me how I could harvest my semen without invasive methods, and I was easily able to replicate that technique in a calm environment at home.

Three months later the double blue lines appeared on a pregnancy test kit, and 23 years later my son George is living as full a life as I did at his age.

I am so proud and suffused with love.”

*Chris Dabbs*

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# Who can you talk to?



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If you want further help you can :-

- Call or make an appointment to speak to our staff who specialise in sexuality after spinal cord injury.  
They can be contacted through Spinal Out-patients on 01296 315829.
- You may find it helpful to talk to an advisor from the Spinal Injuries Association (SIA).  
Freephone 0800 9800501

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This is the property of National Spinal Injury Centre of Stoke Mandeville Hospital  
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