

spina bifida

Passport to success

General health in spina bifida: The facts and how to stay well and happy

If you're sick, you won't be happy. Improving continence is only one part of staying well if you have spina bifida.

How can I stay well and happy?

- Look after yourself.
- Keep fit.
- Don't get fat.
- Make sure that you attend a specialist spina bifida clinic to prevent problems.
- Don't come to the clinic when you are sick. It might be too late.
- Remember, prevention is better than cure.

General health in spina bifida: Other health problems

Obesity: Getting fat

Many people with spina bifida put on weight as they get older.

Lack of mobility is a major contributing factor to the development of obesity in spina bifida.

It is crucial that you are able to manage your weight and that you do **not** get fat.

If you put on too much weight you will:

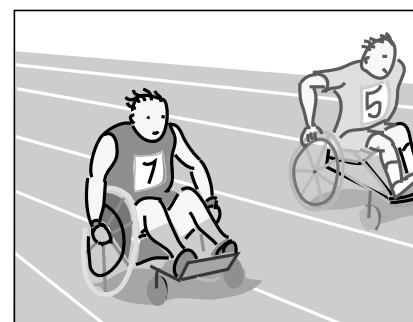
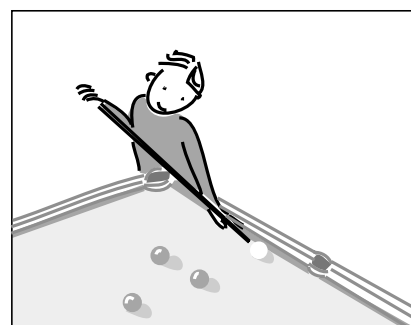
- lose mobility, including ability to transfer, and lose independence
- develop arthritis in your legs, arms and spine
- have trouble breathing
- lose your energy.

Stay physically active to keep your weight down. Sport and exercise, as well as keeping you active and slim, can be a major opportunity for social contact, peer support and meeting prospective partners. Are you aware of how many different sporting activities are possible for you?

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| • Archery | • Baseball |
| • Basketball | • Billiards |
| • Cricket | • Fencing |
| • Handball | • Lawn bowls |
| • Power lifting | • Road racing |
| • Rugby | • Shooting |
| • Swimming | • Table tennis. |

What about wheelchair dancing?

Sound like fun?



Skin care and pressure sores

Skin problems are common in spina bifida, especially when you are in a wheelchair.

What skin problems occur and why?

The major problems are:

- poor mobility
- reduced sensation from damaged nerves
- naturally thin skin
- poor circulation
- difficulty reaching down to clip toenails and staying clean
- badly fitting shoes, aids and wheelchairs.

How can I prevent skin problems?

- Exercise and maintain mobility.
- Don't get fat.
- Move your weight regularly when sitting, and check your skin for telltale signs of a pressure sore.
- Attend your specialist clinic. They can make sure that your shoes, aids and wheelchair are OK.
- When you get a skin problem, see your doctor immediately. Never delay.