

Spinal Cord Injuries

YOUR GUIDE TO COMPLEX WORLD OF
SPINAL CORD PERSONAL INJURY CASES



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ABOUT FOWLER HELSEL VOGT



NORTHERN CALIFORNIA PERSONAL INJURY ATTORNEYS

Proudly serving Fresno and the surrounding areas

With over 40 years of legal experience, our personal injury attorneys know all too well the devastation that can occur because of one small action. During times of uncertainty and change, our firm is here to help those impacted by spinal cord injuries see the light at the end of the tunnel. In this eBook, we provide resources to help these individuals and their families heal and discuss how our firm may be able to help them move forward with their lives.

FREE CONSULTATION

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Spinal cord injuries (SCI) are one of the most severe injuries that the human body can withstand. If a person survives an accident that leads to a spinal cord injury, their life will undoubtedly change forever. Not only will they have extensive ongoing medical expenses, but depending on the extent of the injury, they will have to learn an entirely new way of living.

SPINAL CORD INJURY STATISTICS

17

thousand new cases of SCI in the U.S. each year

78

percent of all new patients are males

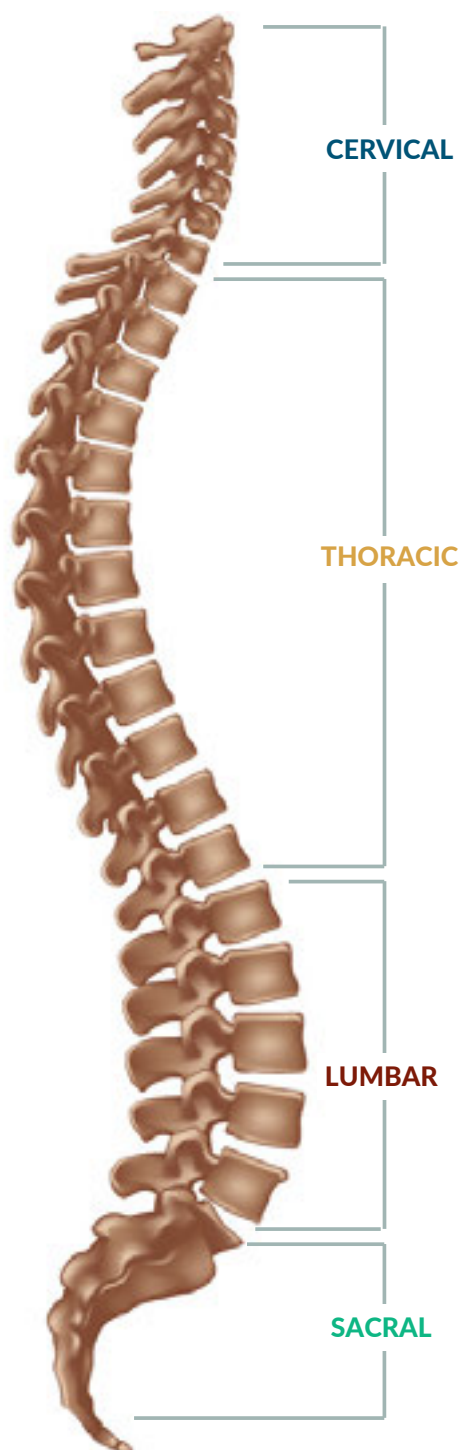
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thousand people in the U.S. living with SCI

Spinal injuries occur when there is damage to any part of the spinal cord or nerves at the end of the spinal canal.

There are four sections of the spine: cervical, thoracic, lumbar, and sacral. Depending on which part of the spine is injured, various levels of impairment can result.

The next page shows the various sections of the spine and what type of impairment may result when they are injured.



C1 - C4 Cervical Nerves

High-cervical nerve injuries are the most severe of all spinal cord injuries. Damage to these nerves will ultimately lead to paralysis in arms, hands, trunk, and legs (paraplegia or tetraplegia). The individual may not be able to cough, breathe, or use the bathroom on their own.

C5 - C8 Cervical Nerves

Low-cervical nerves control the functions of the arms and legs. These injuries typically cause loss of control over their arms and legs, but talking and breathing are usually unimpaired. Individuals who sustain these injuries can usually use a powered wheelchair.

T1 - T5 Thoracic Nerves

Located in the midback, these nerves affect muscles, upper chest, mid-back, and abdominal muscles. Individuals with damage to the high thoracic nerves will have arm and hand use (paraplegia) and usually require a manual wheelchair.

T6 - T12 Thoracic Nerves

Damage to these nerves usually results in paraplegia. Individuals with this level of spinal cord injury have normal control of their upper body. Some can stand with a standing frame or walk with braces.

L1 - L5 Lumbar Nerves

These injuries generally result in loss of function in the hips and legs. They may have little control of their bladder or bowel, but special equipment can help them manage in some cases.

S1 - S5 Sacral Nerves

These injuries generally lead to loss of function in the hips and possibly the legs. Most will be able to walk, however, they usually require special management for loss of bowel and bladder function.

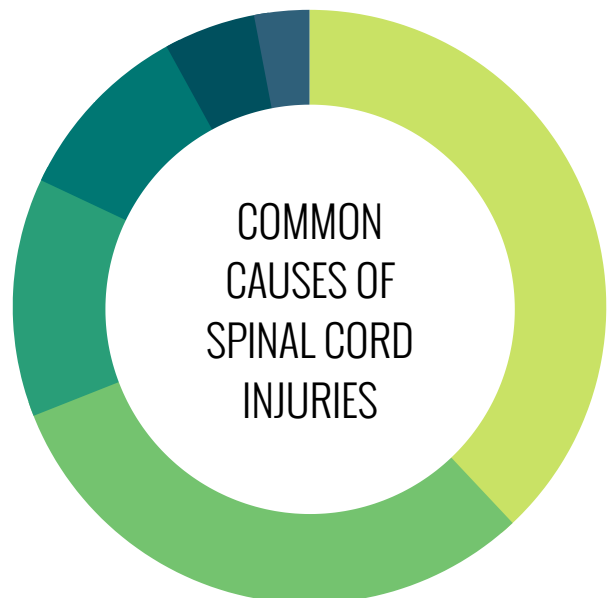


Any type of spinal cord injury generally leads to one or more of the following symptoms:

- Loss of movement or function of some part of the body
- Loss or altered sensation, such as the ability to feel heat, cold, and touch
- Loss of bowel or bladder control
- Exaggerated reflex activities or spasms
- Changes in sexual function or sexual sensitivity
- Pain or an intense stinging sensation caused by damage to the nerve fibers in your spinal cord
- Difficulty breathing, coughing, or clearing your lungs



Most spinal cord injuries are sustained in severe **auto accidents**.



- Auto accidents - 38%
- Falls - 31%
- Acts of violence - 13%
- Sports injuries - 10%
- Medical causes - 5%
- Other - 3%

The Real Costs of Spinal Cord Injuries

A spinal cord injury can leave a family with **devastating financial hardships**.

The individual may have been the breadwinner for the home, meaning a significant reduction in household income. If the individual needs care at home, the other spouse may need to leave their job to take care of their loved one.

Lost wages in these situations can be made worse because spinal cord injuries usually lead to exponentially higher medical bills.



According to the Christopher and Dana Reeve Foundation, average cost of medical expenses for various spinal cord injuries include:

	First year	Each year annually thereafter	Total Costs After 5 Years	Total Costs After 10 Years
Incomplete motor function	\$347,000	\$42,000	\$515,000	\$725,000
Paraplegia	\$518,000	\$69,000	\$794,000	\$1,139,000
Low Quadriplegia	\$769,000	\$113,000	\$1,221,000	\$1,786,000
High Quadriplegia	\$1,000,000	\$184,000	\$1,736,000	\$2,656,000

After 20 years, an individual with high quadriplegia may be facing medical expenses of nearly \$4.5 million.

A spinal cord injury is a lifelong disability. There are also several secondary, long-term physical complications that can arise.

CARDIOVASCULAR *complications*

Spinal cord injuries can compromise an individual's cardiovascular control, which can lead to either short-term or long-term consequences.

High thoracic spinal cord injuries (mid to upper spine) may result in hypotension, bradycardia, autonomic dysreflexia, or coronary heart disease (CHD).

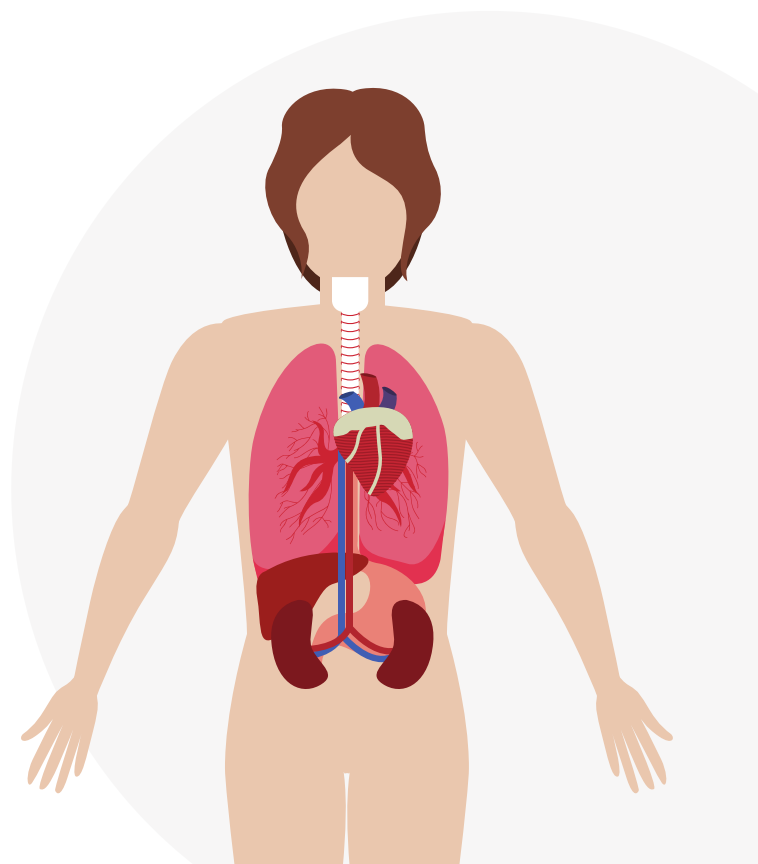
RESPIRATORY *complications*

Respiratory complications are the most common cause of mortality among those with SCI.

The extent of these complications will vary depending on the degree of motor impairment. A SCI can lead to:

- Insufficiency of respiratory muscles
- Reduction in vital capacity
- Ineffective cough
- Reduction in lung and chest wall compliance
- Excess oxygen cost of breathing

In turn, these complications can cause atelectasis, pneumonia, and respiratory failure.



PAIN *syndromes*

Pain is a frequent secondary condition for most individuals with spinal cord injuries. Nearly 80% of all individuals with SCI report having chronic pain.

These conditions can cause emotional discomfort and negatively impact participation and quality of life.



People with spinal cord injury are **2 to 5 times** more likely to die prematurely.

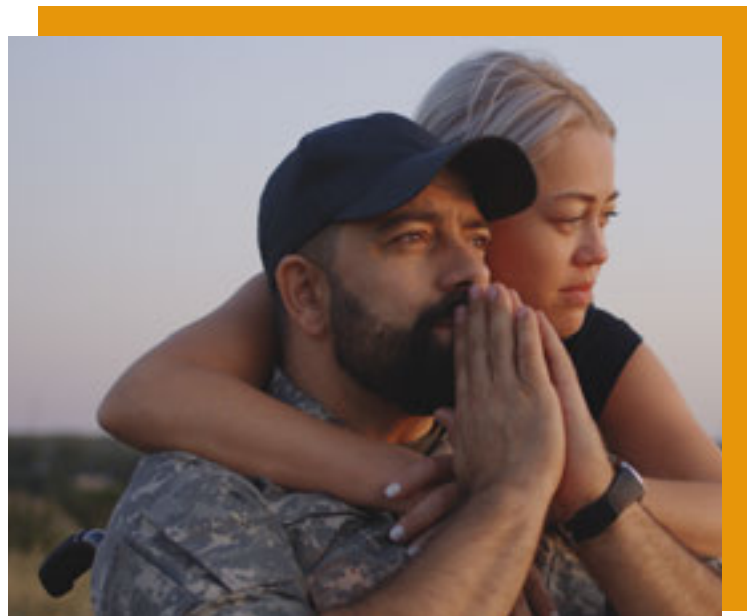
Emotional Adjustment

Most spinal cord injuries result in some type of physical disability, such as paraplegia or quadriplegia.

Understandably, many of these individuals experience feelings of helplessness or confusion. They may distance themselves from family members during this time.

This is a normal part of the adjustment process that can occur to individuals after sustaining a spinal cord injury. Other stages of this process include:

- Grieving
- Being alone
- Talking about their disability
- Joining support groups
- Taking care of themselves
- Coming to terms with their new situation
- Looking ahead



Inability to Participate

An individual may not be able to participate in the things he or she did prior to a spinal cord injury. Even the mundane activities they did before may now be more difficult or undoable, such as:

- Walking the dog
- Picking up kids from school
- Doing chores
- Cooking
- Showering/bathing

The best way for family members to help is to let their loved ones know they are there for them in any way.



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We understand that nothing may be able to truly make up for the pain that you and your family have gone through after a spinal cord injury. We also want you to know that you don't have to go through this process alone.

At Fowler | Helsel | Vogt, we have made it our mission to help pursue justice for those injured due to the negligent actions of others. Our dedicated and award-winning legal team will work as your legal advocates so you obtain the compensation needed for you to heal and move forward.



Contact our firm at **(559) 543-8107** to schedule your free consultation.



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