Autonomic Dysreflexia Wallet Card

**Autonomic Dysreflexia (A.D.)**

Autonomic Dysreflexia can happen to people with a spinal cord injury (SCI) at or above T-6. It is an acute medical emergency which could result in a seizure or stroke due to a high blood pressure. This **MUST BE TREATED IMMEDIATELY.**

- Sit up and raise level of head
- Check bladder drainage
- If A.D. is during bowel program, stop bowel program
- Check skin
- Loosen tight clothing or shoes
- Seek emergency medical treatment if signs continue. Report A.D. to your health care provider.

**Notes to Health Care Provider:**

- Temporary treatment (vasodilators):
  - 2% Nitroglycerin (Nitro-Bid ointment or Nitroglycerin sublingual tab)
  - Nifedipine Procardia (bitten or chewed)
  - Atropine (only for significant bradycardia)

**Common Warning Signs/Causes of A.D.**

**Warning Signs**

- Sudden rise in blood pressure (20-40 mmHg systolic > normal)
- Pounding headache
- Sweating above level of SCI
- Blotchy or flushed skin
- Goose bumps
- Blurry vision, stuffy nose
- Anxiety, feeling something is not right
- Chest tightness, heart flutters, trouble breathing

**Causes**

- Bladder overfilled, plugged catheter, stones or infection
- Bowel irritation, digital stimulation, constipation, impaction, hemorrhoids
- Skin pressure, sores, ingrown toenail, tight belts or clothing
- Menstrual cramps
- Genital stimulation during sexual activity

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