

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