

## Clean your hands!

Remember also to clean the things that your hands touch, including your wheelchair (push rims, wheel locks, wheels, armrests, and joysticks) and other assistive devices that contact your body. Don't forget other surfaces you interact with such as your phone, which can be wiped with a slightly wet disinfectant cloth. A power wheelchair might be a "cleaner" option than a manual wheelchair if you have access to one, but remind people not to lean on your armrests!

## Don't touch your face!

Consider that your mouth is a useful body part that might be used in unique ways during assists and daily activities. So also, be especially aware of the things that contact your face, nose, and mouth, as they may be risky. Be sure to sanitize objects that might contact your face, and keep away from the objects that can't be easily cleaned. *Like using your teeth to take those dirty gloves off your hands... don't be a #glovemuncher*

## Social distance!

You know to avoid mass transit and crowds, and limit travel and public spaces. But you can't distance yourself from those assisting with transfers, eating, showering, dressing, and other ADLs; and people might help you even when you don't ask for it. So, be particularly aware of your risk for exposure to the virus that can occur when other people are helping you.

If you have a family member who helps you with daily activities, or perhaps a caring friend or professional, you need to share this information with them. They need to stay healthy for you and themselves! Supervise these caregivers making sure that their hygiene is at least as good as yours. *Did that caregiver clean their hands before picking up that transfer board?* If any caregiver develops symptoms, avoid as possible your direct contact with them, consider changing caregivers if possible. If a person with positive symptoms lives with you, plan in advance a separate room for them and if possible, a different bathroom. Any person with symptoms in the household should wear a regular mask to minimize risks of contagiousness. Additionally, clean regularly all surfaces in common areas, hand hygiene, and social distancing.

## Boost your immune system!

Be aware that your immune system might already be weakened by an existing infection (UTI, skin wound, etc.). To help prepare your immune system to fight this virus, think about *risk prevention*. Lessen your risk of a pressure sore by doing extra pressure reliefs. Lessen chances of a UTI by getting enough catheters to last several months, so you don't have to re-use them. Prevent fecal transmission by always washing your hands for at least 20 seconds before, during, and after your bowel program, and have your caregiver do the same!

To help keep your immune system healthy, eat foods that are high in antioxidants and probiotics, like fresh vegetables, fruits, and fermented foods. If you don't usually eat these types of foods, or they are not available to you, you can try supplements to help make your immune system stronger. Be aware that significant changes in your usual foods may also change your bowel routine, so make any changes slowly. Similarly, remember that hydration is essential for your bladder and resistance to infection, but don't drink so much you need to void too often and use up your catheters.

## **Do some exercise!**

Remember that your access and options to exercise might be limited, mainly because going out for exercise increases your risk of exposure to the virus because you'll be around more people and more surfaces that could be infected. Also, if you're not used to using your wheelchair for exercise, consider that the pavement in your neighborhood may be uneven and possibly cause a fall, or that your activity may place different stresses on your shoulders that cause soreness or pain. Try your best to come up with DIY or "At Home" workouts or check out the internet to see what other people with SCI are doing to stay fit while social distancing.

Try to adjust the food you eat to match the amount of exercise you are doing. For example, if you are doing less exercise, then try to eat nutritious foods that have *less calories* than when you worked out more.

## **Do *breathing* exercises!**

You can also do breathing exercises to strengthen your breathing muscles because this virus likes to make a home in your lungs. If you still have your incentive spirometer from when you were an inpatient, USE IT, even if you have a thoracic level injury! Incentive spirometers help you to take a deep breath to help open your lungs up completely. You can also practice breathing in and out of your mouth through a straw (try to plug your nose). Try to practice these activities for 10 minutes at a time, three times a day. If it is too difficult, work your way up! If it is too easy, try to do this while you are lying down flat on your back. Be sure to WASH these training tools with soap and water daily.

*Pushups are great, but let's start the #see10breathe10challenge*

## **Stay sexy *and* safe!**

COVID-19 virus has not been detected in semen and vaginal fluid, but it is detected in stools. The safest sexual partner is someone you live with. Skip sex if your partner feels sick. If you and your partner are currently seeing a fertility specialist, they will not start a new cycle and will not perform any IVF or insemination cycles for the time being based on the most recent guidelines from the American Society of Reproductive Medicine (ASRM).

## **Know about healthcare options!**

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act mandates free testing, *not treatment*, for COVID-19 in persons with and without insurance. The way you can get tested will depend on the city you live in, and treatment costs will vary depending on your coverage plan. You should take some time to research and understand your specific coverage plan. You can call your State Health Department for more information on where, when, and if you should get tested. Do your best to stock up on supplies (caths, bags, etc) and prescriptions.

*Stay Informed, Stay Stocked, Stay Healthy!*

## **Other useful Resources**

*Regarding COVID-19*

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

<https://acl.gov/COVID-19>

<https://community.christopherreeve.org/discussion/645/the-coronavirus-and-spinal-cord-injury-from-nurse-linda>

<https://www.reproductivefacts.org/news-and-publications/covid-19-resources-for-patients/>

*Personal protective equipment* (disclaimer: most open-source PPE is not tested or approved for use against COVID-19, use at own judgment)

<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/hcp/ppe-strategy/index.html>

<https://www.reddit.com/r/COVIDProjects/>

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/opensourcecovid19medicalsupplies/files/>

*“Follow along” chair-friendly exercise professionals (follow for ideas and livestream)*

@BalanceWithJaime (Jamie Austin; FB YT)

@pauleugenefitness (Paul Eugene; IG YT)

@adapttoperform (Ben Clark; FB IG YT)

@SitDownAJ (AJ; IG YT)

@yogaanytime “Yoga for Paralysis” (Quinn Brett)

*“Follow along” chair-friend workouts*

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLwMObymlSHaPIArTOC4JBZfeuU7LN7KVJ>

<https://youtu.be/-Ew-N5Ux0Ns>

<https://youtu.be/R6Nr-VaFcqM>

<https://youtu.be/jvwTLfOk7UY>

<https://youtu.be/FEC357DTNnA>

[https://youtu.be/XAi\\_6syHmlw](https://youtu.be/XAi_6syHmlw)

<https://youtu.be/amiNhmeGe3U>

*SCI-specific podcasts*

This is Spinal Crap

WAGS of SCI

U2FP CureCast

Wheels2Walking with Richard Corbett

Life After Paralysis with Tiffany Carlson