

## Tips:

- Do as much as you can do for yourself! You may struggle, but that is the only way you learn.
- Too many people isolate themselves after getting injured. Try to get out of bed every day and plan something fun to do once a week or a few times each month.
- Ask questions of other people with a SCI. You are not reinventing the wheel. Often, someone else has shared similar experiences and struggles.
- Have a sense of humor! *"Does this wheelchair make my butt look big?"* You must laugh. Humor is an important part of recovery.
- Say please and thank you when you need help. It goes a long way.
- Don't have a spouse or family member be your long-term primary caregiver. Although they must know how to help you (and often they will be helping you), hiring someone *whose job it is to assist you* will preserve the health of your relationship.
- With people close to you, try to separate disagreements about your care, accessibility issues, or other topics concerned with your injury from your personal relationship with that individual. Learn how to treat issues like that as a separate entity, so you can disagree about something involving your SCI without spoiling your day or relationship.
- Have your bed, couch, and furniture the same height as your wheelchair, so transferring is as easy as possible. You can get furniture stilts from most department stores (ex: Target, etc.) to raise the height or remove furniture legs, wheels, or frame to lower the height.
- Need help cutting up your food at a restaurant? Ask the chef to cut it up before being served.
- Keep a tray at home to help you transport stuff on your lap while moving around.
- Carry a backpack in your vehicle with extra supplies and clothes in case of an emergency.
- You can park for FREE with your disabled parking placard at parking meters.
- Airplane travel- flying is not as difficult as you may think. Just be sure to let them know you are coming and arrive at the gate early because they get you on first. Once you are all checked in, they will bring you down to the door of the plane, transfer you into a skinny aisle chair, and then they take you to your seat. You can tell them exactly what things you want to take with you (seat, back, arm-rest, bag, etc.), and they will check the rest and put the chair under the plane. Tell them the chair does not break down, so it stays in one piece. When it is time to get off the plane, you are the last to leave and it is the exact reverse process.
- Concerts, shows, & events- concerts and shows are lots of fun. Don't skip a show because your tickets are not in the handicap section. Box offices will swap them for accessible seats when you get there. Often, buying cheap seats and getting them exchanged for accessible seats yields a great free upgrade to better seats.

Also, with a bit of luck, you can call the box office directly and get accessible seats to events that are sold out.

- If you have a permanent disability, you can get a free lifetime pass to all US National Forests and qualify for Medicare regardless of age.
- You may be asked for documentation stating that you have a disability. Asking your doctor for an official letter saying that you have a spinal cord injury can be handy to keep in your file.
- It would be wise to get a standing order for urinalysis from your doctor. It will save you the hassle of scheduling a doctor's appointment every time you get a UTI.
- Check out the Live to Roll YouTube Channel and website for more awesome tips, tutorials, and vlogs on daily living by one of Triumph Foundations ([www.Triumph-Foundation.org](http://www.Triumph-Foundation.org)) Ambassadors, Shawn Fluke. [www.livetoroll.org](http://www.livetoroll.org)

### **Tricks:**

#### ***Daily Care***

- Quads that can't hold a bar of soap can drop the soap into a tube sock and place it over their hand to securely hold the soap to wash. Or have automatic soap dispensers that you waive your hand under to release the soap.
- Urocare Sport bags are strapped to your upper thigh, allowing you to wear shorts. These bags are easy for quads to empty on their own if you attach them to a [Urocare Quick Drain Valve](#).
- Many women recommend replacing a leg bag with a belly bag if you want to go swimming to hide it under your swimsuit.
- Use Magic Bullet or Enemeez suppositories for best results doing your bowel program. These are not available at pharmacies and are often not covered by insurance; you must buy them online. Avoid over-the-counter suppositories as they are oil-based, dissolve slowly, and often result in accidents (which is a great way to ruin your day).
- A new product made by Coloplast called the [Peristeen anal irrigation system](#) uses water to help people completely evacuate their bowels. Typically requiring a special prescription and training it is a revolutionary way to manage your bowels.
- Get a bidet toilet attachment for an easy way to keep yourself clean after using the restroom.
- If you have limited use of your hands, it's important you have the right bowl program tools. Check out the [EZ Reach Bowel Management Tools](#), including a suppository inserting tool and digital bowel stimulator. [www.the-therapyconnection.com/products/ez-reach-bowel-mgt-tool-combo](http://www.the-therapyconnection.com/products/ez-reach-bowel-mgt-tool-combo)
- D-Mannose sugar is a great way to prevent UTIs and keep your bladder clean and healthy. D-Mannose is a simple sugar that occurs naturally in some plants, including cranberries. In the bladder, D-Mannose can adhere to undesirable

foreign substances, preventing them from sticking to the lining of the bladder and preventing infections.

- [Uqora.com](http://Uqora.com) offers a variety of products that include supplements that have been shown to be clinically effective in preventing UTI's such as D-Mannose, Curcumin, Vitamin D3, and Lactobacillus.

### ***Clothing***

- Buy shoes that are a ½ – 1 size too big. Often due to lack of movement your feet will swell which will result in issues if your shoes are too tight. Give your feet some breathing room. Dr. Scholl's air cushions are nice too.
- Sewing your front pants pockets closed gives you a clean, nice look when sitting.
- To use a catheter bag with pants, you can take them in for alterations and get a zipper added to the thigh to make emptying your bag easier.
- Dickies (polyester/cotton blend) pants slide easy on a transfer board and stay looking clean.
- Putting zipper-pulls, key rings, or loops on zippers makes dressing easier. Mirrors, magnets, loops, rings, and hooks are your friends.
- If you need to wear a tie, consider a children's tie that is shorter in length.
- Wear a long skirt instead of pants to hide a large urinary bag, so you don't have to empty frequently.
- Get magnetic shoelaces, so you don't have to tie your shoes. [ZUBITS](#) on Amazon are great. Off-brand magnetic shoelaces usually aren't as strong.
- An [abdominal binder](#) can help if you have low blood pressure or a quad gut. [Handiaccessories.com](http://Handiaccessories.com) has an abdominal binder with loops to make it easier to put on.

### ***Regulating Body Temperature***

- Depending on your level of injury, you may have difficulty regulating your body temperature. A great way to cool down when it's hot outside is by bringing a spray bottle mister. Another great option is to use a cooling rag that can be soaked in water and put around your neck or head.
- To stay warm wear neck warmers, beanies or other hats to keep your temperature regulated when it's cold out.

### ***Exercise***

- Focus on perfect body mechanics rather than maximizing the weight lifted.
- Sign up for online fitness classes!
- You don't need fancy exercise equipment to work out. You can use many household items to do at-home exercises like a broomstick or dowel.
- Do daily arm circles, punches, other range of motion exercises. Get some wrist/ ankle weights for upper body exercises if you have limited hand function while going through natural body movements.

- Challenge yourself to exercise in different seating positions other than your everyday wheelchair. ex: from a chair, on the edge of a bed or a mat, or long sitting position.
- Focus on posture by sitting up tall, straight, and symmetrical.
- Have someone help you move through movements that you are unable to do properly.
- Always exercise within a pain free range of motion.
- Swimming pools are one of the best places to exercise.

### ***Accessories***

- Power assist wheels and add-ons provide an extra boost to each push of the wheel. Look into e.Motion, Twion, Smartdrive, Tailwind, and other brands/manufacturers.
- Need to easily push your wheelchair over grass, snow, curbs, or dirt trails? Get a FreeWheel attachment for your manual wheelchair. It gently lifts your front casters off the ground turning your wheelchair into a 3-wheel, all-terrain chair.
- Get Frogleg caster wheels because they have suspension in the front to make your ride a little smoother.
- [D's locks](#) and [ADI brakes](#) are wheelchair braking systems that don't slip. All you have to do is pull a lever to set your wheels in a fully locked position.
- Build-it-yourself ramp blueprints [www.Wheelchair-Ramps-DIY.com](http://www.Wheelchair-Ramps-DIY.com)
- Having a portable ramp will allow you to have access to more venues and places. [www.EZAccess.com](http://www.EZAccess.com)
- Purchasing quality push gloves can make it more efficient and less strenuous to maneuver a wheelchair. Check out [Glovesforlife.com](http://Glovesforlife.com) and [rehadesign.com/products/wheelchair-gloves](http://rehadesign.com/products/wheelchair-gloves) for excellent options that fit your needs.
- [Great Push Gloves](#) for quads – Tough rubber palm cuffs that protect your palms, are easy to put on and leave your fingers uncovered and free to use. [www.harnessdesigns.com](http://www.harnessdesigns.com).
- [Activehands.com](http://Activehands.com) offers a variety of gripping aid products that you can put on independently. Their products are great if you have decreased hand function or a weak grip.
- [Quadtools.com](http://Quadtools.com) has a ton of great adaptive equipment explicitly designed for C5-C7 quads to live more independently. Each tool is custom-fitted to each user!
- Get a portable mini air compressor that plugs into your car's cigarette lighter or an outlet in case you lose air pressure in your tires and need a little pick-me-up.
- Always keep an extra wheelchair inner tube with a changing tool kit in your car for emergencies.
- Purchase a power inverter for your vehicle to charge your power chair directly from your car. Consult a mechanic to install the inverter for you and see what will work best with your vehicle.

### ***Home Equipment & Modifications***

- If you live in a home that isn't accessible, you can convert your garage into a living space.
- Various stair climbing systems are available if you live in a two-story home. The [Scalamobil by Alber-USA](#) requires minimal caregiver assistance to operate the machine does all the heavy lifting and stair climbing. This device attaches to almost all manual wheelchairs and can support up to 308lbs in weight.
- [Mobile Stairlift](#) is also a stairclimbing device requiring minimal caregiver assistance; however, it does not attach to a wheelchair, so you would have to keep a wheelchair at the top and bottom of the stairs. [mobilestairlift.com](#)
- There are [portable commode chairs](#) that are easily assembled and great for travel. Check out [www.nuprodx.com](#) for options.
- K Cushion padded portable toilet seat riser cushion cover or cushion for showering. [www.kcushion.com](#)
- Need a roll-in shower? Check out these pop-up shower systems that can hook up to your faucet: [www.LiteShower.com](#)
- Shower Buddy is a shower transfer system that makes your bathroom more accessible, and you can customize it to fit your needs. [shower-buddy.com](#)
- Having trouble closing your door behind you? You can install [spring hinges](#) on the front door or install cabinet knob drawer pulls on doors. Tying a dog leash on your door can also help close doors behind you.
- Make your home or work environment more accessible by changing door knobs for door levers/handles.
- Installing offset hinges on your doors can widen your doorway up to two inches.
- Adjustable bed – Having a bed that sits up is amazing (whether or not you are disabled).  
Can't afford an adjustable bed? Get the Mattress Genie [www.contourliving.com](#)
- [Flexabed.com](#) has a unique adjustable bed because it has a high/low feature that lets you adjust the vertical height of your bed. It's great if you have caregivers that assist you with transfers.
- A Sleep Number mattress has adjustable firmness settings, so you can have it firm for transfers and exercise (like a workout mat) or soft when you sleep to prevent pressure spots. [www.sleepnumber.com](#)
- An excellent mattress that helps prevent and treat pressure sores is the patented VÖLKNER® TURNING SYSTEM, Low Air Loss mattress overlay, and mattress replacement. This mattress uses turning to reduce pressure. [www.volkner.com](#)
- Using a bed ladder or bed rails can be helpful if you need a little assistance to pull yourself up to a sitting position or reposition yourself in bed.

## *Cooking*

- Use a tray to transport stuff around the kitchen without burning yourself.
- Visions cookware is made of clear glass, so you can easily see what you're cooking. <https://www.corningware.com/search?qry=Visions>
- Getting a portable convection cooking plate can also be helpful as you can place it on lower surfaces for easy cooking and warming.
- Use a casserole crockpot for cooking because it's less deep, so you're able to see what's in it.
- An air fryer for cooking is great because the door and basket pull out sideways, making it easy to manage.
- Find a variety of utensils, spill-proof cups, and other adapted products and tools that are easy to handle [www.pattersonmedical.com](http://www.pattersonmedical.com) and [www.rehabmart.com](http://www.rehabmart.com)

### **Swim**

- If you want to go swimming, get an Aquatic Head Float life vest. It keeps your head securely above the water to ensure safety. [www.especialneeds.com](http://www.especialneeds.com)
- Airtime Watertime Floater is a new flotation suit that adds buoyancy and allows people of all abilities to enjoy the water. [www.airtimewatertime.com](http://www.airtimewatertime.com)

### **High-Tech**

- There is assistive technology available that can help your home become more accessible: Smart Assistant – Amazon Alexa or Echo / Google Home etc.; Bluetooth Lightbulbs; Smart Plugs; Nest Thermostat.
- Forbes AAC - <https://www.forbesaac.com/>
- If you cannot use your hands, check out [GlassOuse](http://www.glassouse.com) (www.glassouse.com) for their device that is a mix between glasses and a mouse to help you easily navigate your devices with small head movements.
- Speech recognition software is a great and efficient way to type, check out [Dragon Software](http://www.nuance.com/dragon.html) [www.nuance.com/dragon.html](http://www.nuance.com/dragon.html)
- A great mouse if you have limited hand function is the trackball mice by Kensington. They're easy to use, and their software allows you to customize your controls. [www.kensington.com](http://www.kensington.com)

### **Other**

- Get a wooden sliding board that is nice and slick. Many are available in different lengths. Check out: [www.adi stealthproducts.com/anti-slip-transfer-boards](http://www.adi stealthproducts.com/anti-slip-transfer-boards)
- Quit hauling around multiple medicine bottles and forgetting when to take them a pill organizer will help you keep you on track.
- Attach a wheelchair drink cup holder to your manual wheelchair. Check out [wheelchairparts.net](http://wheelchairparts.net) or [livingspinal.com](http://livingspinal.com). Bike stores also sell them.
- A magnetic car phone mount with a magnetic case is easy to use if you have limited hand function. Apple offers MagSafe car mounts that charge your phone if you have a compatible iPhone. [RAM mounts](#) are also an excellent durable phone mount option.
- Get a cardholder that sticks to the back of your phone for easy access to your cards, and so it provides grip and prevents your phone from sliding off your lap.

- Get an adhesive phone grip holder for your cellphone, so it's easier to hold. They have large hand straps and finger straps available on amazon.
- Attach a magnetic case to your phone, so you can easily mount your phone when driving to a magnetic phone car mount.
- Save money by creating your typing/writing aid with a built-up comfort handle. Get foam insulation from Lowes or Home Depot and use heavy-duty grip tape to attach it to a pencil-type or write. Use the eraser end to type and pencil side to write. You can also use a stylus to type.
- A great way to build up the handle of your hairbrush for easier grip is by cutting a koozie in half and attaching it to the handle.
- A magnetic/sticky reacher is great for picking up items.
- [www.zebredamakesitwork.com](http://www.zebredamakesitwork.com) is a series of videos, demonstrations, reflections, and shared experiences on the practical use, customization, adaptation, and creation of a wide range of Assistive Technology.
- Check out the Tyler Schrenk Foundation's website for assistive technology grants, consultations, educational materials, and more. [www.thetsf.org](http://www.thetsf.org)