



What is AD?

Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) is a sudden increase in blood pressure (BP) 20-40mmHg above baseline.

It is usually caused by an irritant below the level of a spinal cord injury (SCI). AD typically occurs in patients with a SCI at level T6 and above.

Patients with SCI commonly have a lower baseline blood pressure (especially those with higher level of injury). An elevated blood pressure for patients with a SCI may still be within normal range for patients without a SCI.

If not treated immediately, AD can lead to stroke, seizure or death.

If AD does not resolve or patient is unresponsive call 911 or activate Medical Emergency Response

MY INFORMATION

Name: _____

Alberta Health Care (AHC) #: _____

Baseline Blood Pressure: _____

Neurological Level of Injury: _____

Primary Healthcare Provider: _____

Allergies: _____

EMERGENCY CONTACT

In Case of Emergency Call: _____

Relationship: _____

Phone Number: _____



This brochure was designed by AHS and SCI-AB to support patients with spinal cord injury when seeking assistance for autonomic dysreflexia.

Helping others understand your AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA





Common Causes

(of irritant)

- Full or distended bladder (most common)
- Full bowel or constipation
- Areas of pressure
- Sitting/lying on something hard
- Constrictive devices or clothing
- Skin or body hair caught in zippers

Common Signs and Symptoms:

- Pounding headache
- Sweating above level of injury
- Flushing of skin above level of injury
- Pale and/or coolness below level of injury
- Goose bumps below the level of injury
- Blurred vision and/or nasal congestion
- Feelings of apprehension or anxiety

What to do:

- Ask patient if they suspect a cause
- Sit patient up at 90 degrees
- Remove cause of irritant if known
- Loosen any tight clothing/zippers or restrictive devices
- Monitor BP every 2-5 minutes
- Check bladder: catheterize or check indwelling catheter for kinks or blockage
- Check bowel: disimpact bowel only if systolic BP is less than 150mmHg
- Check skin for areas of pressure
- **Access Alberta Health Services provincial AD protocol**
- **EMS:** Access Online Medical Consult (OLMC)

AHS Autonomic Dysreflexia Protocol

Outlines recognition and treatment including medication management (for healthcare providers)

