



RESEARCH BRIEF

Behavioral Factors and Unintentional Injuries After SCI

What did we study?

Our objective was to identify the relationships between behavioral factors and unintentional injuries among those with spinal cord injury (SCI). We measured behavioral factors such as alcohol misuse, non-medical substance use, frequency of prescription medication use, prescription medication misuse, and weight status (a proxy measure for healthy diet), as well as the number of times in the past year that they had been injured seriously enough to receive care, and whether any of the injuries were caused by a fall.

What did we find?

- Almost one quarter (23%) of the participants reported at least one unintentional injury in the past year serious enough to receive care.
- Among those with at least one injury, the average number of times injured was 1.82.
- Prescription medication use for pain and depression, non-medical substance use, use of prescription medication for purposes other than prescribed, and binge drinking were associated with a greater chance of unintentional injury.
- Those who were able to walk to some degree had a higher chance of fall related injuries, but a lower chance of non-fall related injuries.

What can I do?

Unintentional injuries are common among people with SCI. After controlling for injury and demographic characteristics, several behaviors (including substance misuse, use of prescription medications, and binge drinking) were associated with the risk of unintentional injury. Additionally, there was an elevated risk of fall-related injuries among those who walk, and especially for those who require assistance to walk.

You can assess your risk of fall and non-fall related injuries by using the following calculators.

SCI Unintentional Injury Risk Calculator - <https://chp.musc.edu/research/centers/crrnc/help/tools/fall-related-unintentional-injury-calculator>

This research is not to be taken for medical advice. Always speak with your healthcare provider with any health concerns. Never change your medication usage without speaking to your physician.

Full publication link: Cao, Y., DiPiro, N., Li, C., Roesler, J., & Krause, J. S. (2020). Behavioral Factors and Unintentional Injuries After Spinal Cord Injury. *Archives of physical medicine and rehabilitation*, 101(3), 412–417. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.apmr.2019.09.008>