

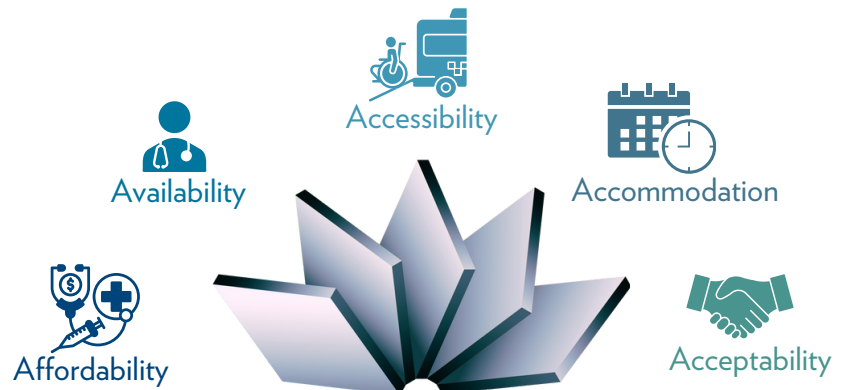
Understanding Healthcare Access for Adults with Spinal Cord Injury in South Carolina.

Summary

- > Living with a spinal cord injury (SCI) often means needing regular care and support, but access can be affected by cost, transportation, and available providers.
- > This fact sheet presents findings from a self-report study of 1,421 individuals living with SCI in South Carolina, surveyed an average of five years after injury.
- > Guided by the Five A's of Access to Care: affordability, availability, accessibility, accommodation, and acceptability, we looked at how people seek care.
- > The findings show that many people continue to face challenges such as costs, limited services, and communication issues that can make getting needed care difficult.
- > Taking small steps, like staying on top of checkups and using available resources, can help you get the care you need and stay healthy.



Access to Care Dimensions



Affordability: Can I afford the care, medications, and supplies I need?

 **Figure 1. Worries About Affording Care**

1 in 5 

Nearly 1 in 5 people with SCI often worry about covering the costs of doctor visits, prescriptions, medical supplies, or keeping their insurance.



Managing healthcare costs is possible, but challenges remain for some.

1 in 5 

About 1 in 5 skipped medications because of cost and missed care because they didn't have insurance.



Mental health care remains out of reach for some

1 in 7 

Out of the 1,261 valid responses, about 1 in 7 (15%) needed to see a counselor or therapist in the past year but could not because of cost.

Availability: Are there enough providers and clinics to meet my needs?

 Most people have a regular doctor, but some still miss out on routine and preventive care.

- 1 in 4 (23%) did not have a personal doctor or healthcare provider.
- About 1 in 7 (14%) did not have a usual place they go when sick or needing advice.
- Among the 620 valid responses, 95% receive their routine or preventive care at a doctor’s office, clinic, or health center. Only 3% rely on hospitals, and 2% go to other locations. (See Figure 2).

Figure. 2 Preferred Places for Routine and Preventive Care



Emergency Department (ED) Use Among Recent Visitors

Among the 299 SCI individuals who reported at least one ED visit in the past year:

- 4 in 10 relied on the ED because they had no other options.
- About 1 in 5 people rely on the ED as their main source of care.



Why This Matters

Having a regular place to receive care is essential for managing health after SCI. Individuals without a usual source of care often rely on the emergency department, which can indicate limited access to preventive and ongoing healthcare. Ensuring access to consistent, coordinated care can help reduce avoidable ED visits, improve health outcomes, and support better quality of life.

Accessibility: Can I physically get to appointments and facilities?

1 in 5 
lacked transportation

Roughly 1 in 5 (18%) people with SCI missed or postponed care because they lacked transportation.

1 in 10 
missed mental healthcare

Approximately 1 in 10 (11%) reported needing mental health care but couldn’t access it due to transportation or assistance barriers.

1 in 5 
limited support in transportation

About 1 in 5 people have little or no help getting to the doctor, while 4 in 5 usually or always have someone to assist them.

1 in 2 
ED closest doctor

Among the 264 valid responses from people with at least one ED visit in the past year, about 1 in 2 said the ED was their closest doctor.

What This Means for You

When transportation affects whether you can see a doctor, get counseling, or manage ongoing needs, it impacts your overall health and independence. This data highlights why finding support and resources matters for protecting your well-being.

Accommodation: Are clinics organized in ways that work for my schedule and mobility?

- 1 in 4 (24%) people missed a routine checkup in the past year,



What It Means for Your Care



Getting a full checkup at least once a year is important for people with SCI because it helps catch complications early, keeps necessary screenings on track, and supports your overall well-being.

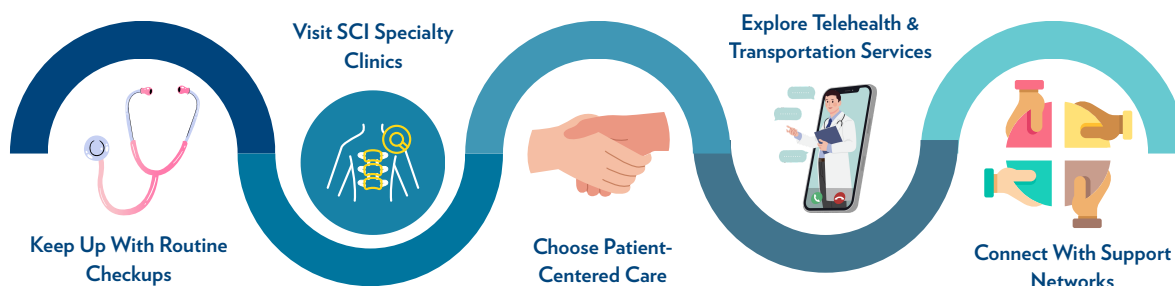


If you're not satisfied with your healthcare access, let your providers know. Together, you can explore options like telehealth, specialty clinics, or support services that make care easier to reach.

Aceptability: Do I feel comfortable and satisfied with the care I receive?

- Nearly 4 in 10 participants reported being neutral or dissatisfied with healthcare availability, while just over half (56%) were satisfied.

What You Can Do: Practical Tips for Better Care Access¹⁻²



References

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- 2 Eriks-Hoogland I, Jordan X, Baumberger M, et al. Recommendations for long-term follow-up care of secondary health conditions in spinal cord injury/disorder: a systematic review. *Front Rehabil Sci.* 2024;5:1371553. Published 2024 Oct 11. doi:10.3389/freesc.2024.1371553

About This Fact Sheet

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