Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) is a sudden increase in blood pressure, 20-40 mm Hg systolic higher than usual, resulting from harmful, painful, or injurious stimuli applied below neurologic levels in persons with a spinal cord injury (SCI). This condition, which is caused by massive unopposed sympathetic discharge, occurs primarily in those with an injury above the thoracic T6 level. If left untreated, it can lead to a stroke, seizures, or even death.

**COMMON CAUSES:**
- Distended bladder
- Constipated bowel
- Pressure ulcers
- Fractured bones
- Skin burns
- Urinary tract infections
- Ingrown toenails
- Any condition or procedures that may cause pain or discomfort but is located below neurologic injury level

**WHAT IT IS:**
Autonomic Dysreflexia (AD) is a medical emergency.

**MY INFORMATION**

| Name: |  |
| MEDICAL HISTORY |  |
| Baseline Blood Pressure: |  |
| Baseline Body Temperature: |  |
| Neurological Location of Injury: |  |
| Primary Healthcare Provider: |  |
| Phone Number: |  |
| Allergies: |  |

**EMERGENCY CONTACT**

| In Case of Emergency Call: |  |
| Relationship: |  |
| Phone Number: |  |

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COMMON SIGNS & SYMPTOMS

ABOVE LEVEL OF INJURY

- Hypertension (A fast increase in blood pressure, 20-40 mm Hg systolic higher than usual)
- Bradycardia (slow heart rate) or Tachycardia (fast heart rate)
- Pounding headache
- Apprehension/anxiety/uneasy feeling
- Changes in vision
- Nasal congestion
- Sweating
- Flushed skin
- Goosebumps
- Tingling sensation

BELOW LEVEL OF INJURY

- Nausea
- Chills without fever
- Clammy
- Cool
- Pale

WHAT TO DO

- Sit up—Sit up or raise your head 90 degrees.
  IMPORTANT: Stay sitting or upright until blood pressure is normal.
- Take off—Take off or loosen anything tight or restrictive.
- Check blood pressure—Monitor your blood pressure every 5 minutes if greater than 20 mm Hg over your baseline. Be sure to use an appropriate size cuff.
- Check bladder—Empty your bladder (i.e., catheterize your bladder). If you have an indwelling catheter, check for kinks and blockages.
- Check bowel—Disimpact bowel after inserting anesthetic jelly or ointment.
- Check skin—Examine skin for new wounds, pressure ulcers, burns, cuts, insect bites, etc.
- Find other source—Assess for any other possible source of harmful/painful stimuli or irritant if symptoms have not resolved.
- Find help—if not able to promptly resolve symptoms on your own, call your healthcare provider for further assistance or go to your nearest emergency room.
  IMPORTANT: Tell staff you may have dysreflexia, need your blood pressure checked, need to remain sitting up, and need causes of the problem sought.