

### TEST YOUR SAFETY I.Q.

**Q** What causes at least 30 people to become paralyzed every day?

**A** Spinal cord injuries, which generally occur in two forms: paraplegia and quadriplegia.<sup>1</sup>

**Q** What is the difference between paraplegia and quadriplegia?

**A** Paraplegia is paralysis of the lower body, while quadriplegia causes paralysis from the neck down.<sup>1</sup> Paraplegia accounts for 46.3% of spinal cord injuries, while quadriplegia accounts for 51.6%.<sup>2</sup>

## ThinkFirst about...

### DEATH AND INJURY STATISTICS

- Approximately 11,000 new spinal cord injuries occur each year in the U.S.<sup>3</sup>
- A projected 4,860 victims of spinal cord injuries die before reaching the hospital each year.<sup>4</sup>
- An estimated 183,000-230,000 Americans are living with spinal cord injuries.<sup>5</sup>
- Causes of Spinal Cord injuries include:
  - Motor vehicle incidents (38.5%)
  - Acts of violence (24.5%)
  - Falls (21.8%)
  - Sports (7.2%) Two-thirds of sports injuries result from diving.<sup>6</sup>
  - Other (7.9%)<sup>7</sup>
- After the age of 45, falls are the leading cause of spinal cord injury.<sup>8</sup>
- As age increases, acts of violence and sports account for fewer injuries.<sup>9</sup>

### WHO IS MOST LIKELY TO INCUR THIS TYPE OF INJURY?

Of the 250,000 individuals who are living with spinal cord injuries or spinal dysfunction:

- 82% male, 18% female.<sup>10</sup>
- Highest per capita rate of injury occurs between ages 16-30.<sup>11</sup>
- Average age at injury is 32 years old.<sup>12</sup>

### HEALTH COSTS

#### Lifetime costs:

Average yearly healthcare and living expenses that are directly attributed to SCI vary greatly according to the severity of the injury:

Severity of Injury	First Year	Each Subsequent Year
High Tetraplegia (C1-C4)	\$572,178	\$102,491
Low Tetraplegia (C5-C8)	\$369,488	\$41,983
Paraplegia	\$209,074	\$21,274
Incomplete Motor Function at any level	\$168,627	\$11,817

**Estimated lifetime costs (discounted at 2%) depend on severity of injury and age at injury:**

Severity of Injury	25 years old	50 years old
High Tetraplegia (C1-C4)	\$2,185,667	\$1,286,714
Low Tetraplegia (C5-C8)	\$1,235,841	\$782,628
Paraplegia	\$730,277	\$498,095
Incomplete Motor Function at any level	\$487,150	\$353,047

Indirect costs such as fringe benefits, lost wages and productivity, which average approximately \$49,312 each year, are not accounted for in the lifetime costs. This amount can vary greatly depending upon education, injury and prior employment.<sup>13</sup>

# ThinkFirst about...

### PREVENTION TIPS

- Always wear a safety belt when riding in an automobile.
- All children age 12 and under should ride properly restrained in the back seat.<sup>14</sup>
- All children who have outgrown child safety seats should be properly restrained in booster seats until they are at least 8 years old, unless they are 4'9" tall.<sup>15</sup>
- Remember to follow the rules of the road and obey speed limits.
- Always wear proper safety gear when engaging in any sport.
- Always check the depth of water before diving in.
- Never dive into a pool unless it is 9 feet or deeper; never dive into an above ground pool.
- Explain to children that guns are dangerous and that children should never touch guns or remain in a friends' home where a gun is accessible.
- Talk with your teen about ways to solve arguments and fights without guns or violence.
- Always keep your gun unloaded and locked up. Lock and store bullets in a separate location.

### STILL NOT CONVINCED?

The average spinal cord injury victim spends 16 days in the hospital followed by a 44-day stay in a rehabilitation unit.<sup>16</sup> However, their struggle with paralysis will be a lifelong battle. Only 0.9% will ever recover completely.<sup>17</sup> Not only are everyday tasks such as getting dressed, cooking and showering a struggle, the likelihood of marriage or returning to work is decreased. 88% of single people with spinal cord injuries were still single five years after the incident,<sup>18</sup> and 41.3% of those injured were unemployed eight years after the incident.<sup>19</sup> Remember, there isn't a cure for a spinal cord injury and it takes only a split second to change your life forever.

## ThinkFirst

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#### SOURCES:

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.spinalcord.org/resource/Factsheets/factsheet8.html>

<sup>2, 3, 5, 7, 10, 11, 12, 13, 16</sup> <http://images.main.uab.edu/spinalcord/pdf/files/factsfig.pdf>

<sup>4, 17</sup> [www.wheelweb.com/facts.htm](http://www.wheelweb.com/facts.htm)

<sup>6, 8, 9</sup> [www.neurolaw.com/spine.html](http://www.neurolaw.com/spine.html)

<sup>14, 15</sup> [www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/safetycheck/MinuteChecklist/index.htm](http://www.nhtsa.dot.gov/people/injury/childps/safetycheck/MinuteChecklist/index.htm)

<sup>18, 19</sup> [www.sci-info-pages.com/facts.htm](http://www.sci-info-pages.com/facts.htm)