AUTONOMIC DYSREFLEXIA (AD) is a condition where the brain is unable to receive signals of distress from the nervous system (full bladder/bowel, pain, infection, etc.), requiring the body to utilize other methods to convey information. Those with SCI at the sixth nerve of the thoracic spine or above are most commonly at risk, and in some cases the seventh and eighth nerve. Complete/Incomplete injuries are also at risk.

**EMERGENCY TREATMENT**
- Sit up or raise head to 90°. Remain upright until BP is normal.
- Loosen or remove tight clothing.
- Check/empty bowel or bladder.
- Call health care professional, even if symptoms go away.
- Monitor BP every 5 minutes.

**SIGNS & SYMPTOMS**
There are several symptoms, but the most dangerous is significant elevation in blood pressure (BP). Left untreated AD can result in stroke or death. The BP of a person with spinal cord injury (SCI) is generally lower than an able-bodied person. A normal reading of 120/80 could be life-threatening for a SCI patient. Thus it is important to find out your patient’s “usual/baseline” blood pressure.

- Sudden/Significant Elevation of BP
- Severe Headache
- Profuse Sweating
- Goosebumps
- Blurred Vision
- Seeing Spots
- Flushed Skin
- Nasal Congestion
- Slowed Pulse
- Tightness of Chest
- Anxiety

**WHAT CAUSES AD?**
AD has many potential causes, specifically any painful or irritating stimuli below the level of injury, such as:
- Bladder/Organ Distention
- Urinary Tract Infection
- Hemorrhoids
- Constrictive Clothing
- Sexual Intercourse
- Pregnancy
- Scrotal Compression
- Menstruation

**FULL BLADDER**
**URINARY TRACT INFECTION**
**CONSTIPATION**