

Who can I talk to if I have questions or concerns?

A spinal cord compression can make you feel afraid and anxious when you start to feel any symptoms. Please talk to your health care team about how you are feeling. They will help you feel less anxious and afraid.

Your health care team will:

- Listen to your concerns
- Let you know why this is happening to you
- Let you know what treatment will be best for you
- Give you and your family comfort and support

Note:

If you have any questions or concerns:

**Monday to Friday,
9:00am–4:30pm**

- Please call the Nursing Team at 416-480-5000

Outside of these hours and on weekends and statutory holidays

- Please call the After-Hours telephone line 1-877-681-3057



At the Odette Cancer Center, Patient & Family Support offers free services to help you manage eating, stress, worry, financial concerns, changes in health, and daily activities.

Visit the Patient & Family Support offices (T-Wing ground floor, TG-230) or call 416-480-4623.

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What You Need to Know About Spinal Cord Compression

This brochure will give you information about:

- What spinal cord compression is
- Who is at risk
- What the symptoms are
- What treatment you can expect
- Who to talk to if you have questions or concerns

**Patient and
Family Education**




What is spinal cord compression?

Spinal cord compression is a health emergency that is caused by bone metastases (cancer cells that spread to the bone). Spinal cord compression happens when a tumour presses on the spinal cord and/or nerves in your spine.

Spinal cord compression can cause severe pain. It can also make you lose feeling in certain areas of your body such as in your:

- Arms
- Legs
- Bowels
- Bladder

These parts of your body may stop working the way they should. **If this happens, you need to get medical help right away to make sure you don't get more severe symptoms.**



If you lose feeling or function in your arms, legs, bowels or bladder, go to your nearest emergency room right away and let your health care team know.

Tell them you are worried about your symptoms and “spinal cord compression”.

Who is at risk for spinal cord compression?

You are at risk of getting spinal cord compression if you have cancer that has spread to your bones. You are more at risk if you have myeloma, breast, prostate, kidney or lung cancer that has spread to your bones.

Your health care team will let you know what your risk is for spinal cord compression.

What are the symptoms of spinal cord compression?


The main symptom of spinal cord compression is any new pain or tenderness in your middle, upper or lower back.

You may also have:

- Trouble walking or losing your balance
- Weakness, heaviness or stiffness in your arms or legs
- Numbness (loss of feeling) and tingling in your arms or legs
- Not being able to hold your urine (pee) or bowel movements (poop)
- Not being able to pass urine (go pee) or bowel movements (go poop)
- A history of back pain that gets worse when you move (such as cough or sneeze) or lay down

What should I do if I have any symptoms?

If you have symptoms of spinal cord compression you need medical help right away. If you get help quickly you can stop symptoms from getting worse.



If you have any symptoms, go to your nearest emergency room right away and let your health care team know.

Tell them your symptoms and that you are worried about “spinal cord compression”.

Please take your pain medication(s) and a family member with you to the emergency room.

What treatment is used for spinal cord compression?

Treatments for spinal cord compression include:

- Radiation therapy
- Medications to help with any pain and swelling (corticosteroids and analgesics)
- In some cases your doctor may suggest that you have surgery

The goal of your treatment will be to:

- Help you move your arms and legs
- Help with back pain
- Help you walk