

## **Dysreflexia Alert**

Acute autonomic dysreflexia is a serious medical condition, which may occur in those who have had a spinal cord injury at or above the nipple line [7th thoracic vertebral]. Pressure signals from parts of the lower body are received. A slowing of the heart rate occurs and the blood pressure rises dramatically. A stroke [cerebral vascular hemorrhage] can occur. Immediate action is needed to relieve the cause. Notify the student's physician, school RN, and parents immediately if the student shows signs of acute autonomic dysreflexia, **Dial 911**.

### **A. General Guidelines**

#### *1. Symptoms*

- a) Sweating (diaphoresis) above the level of injury
- b) Goose bumps
- c) Flushing or blotching
- d) Chills without fever
- e) Headache not related to sinuses or tension
- f) Unusual feeling or "anxious"
- g) Slow heart rate (bradycardia)
- h) Elevated blood pressure (20 mm Hg above normal pressure)

#### *2. Etiology – any one of the combinations of the following:*

- a) Bladder full of urine because:
  - Catheter bent, twisted or clamped
  - Catheter clogged with sediment
  - Over-filled urine leg bag
  - Bladder unable to empty urine
- b) Spastic bladder
- c) Bladder infection
- d) Bowel is full of stool
- e) Other stimuli to viscera (i.e. pressure on skin surface, urological procedure or problem, uterine contraction, and so forth)

#### *3. Equipment for providing treatment*

- a) Blood pressure cuff
- b) Stethoscope

### **B. Personnel Recommendations**

A student suffering from acute autonomic dysreflexia creates a serious medical emergency situation. All staff shall cooperate in performing appropriate activities, as directed by the person handling the emergency.

### **C. Procedure**

1. Put the student in a sitting position.
2. Relieve the bladder pressure by:
  - a. Straighten the catheter
  - b. Empty the urine bag
  - c. Perform urinary catheterization
  - d. Contact school RN to irrigate urinary catheter or remove it if there is a physician's order to do so. Student must remain sitting until symptoms (headaches, etc.) have decreased and discomforts resolved.
3. Notify school RN to take blood pressure after putting into sitting position and after checking for causes. Implement emergency notification procedures if the cause is not immediately

- apparent and the symptoms do not subside. Inform parents of intention to call paramedics or other available medical transportation for transfer immediately to nearest emergency facility.
4. Record procedure on permanent health record.
  5. Notify parents.

### **Bowel/Bladder Training Program (Prescribed)**

#### **A. General Guidelines**

1. Students needing bowel/bladder training do not feel the sensation of wetting or soiling themselves and have no control over the muscles of the bowel or bladder.
2. A program can be started even without the student's awareness or understanding.
3. The program is usually started at home and supported at school. Medications and enemas are to be given at home.
4. To be successful the plan must be written, understood and followed carefully by the caregivers at home and at school.
5. The program will vary according to the student's needs and the physician's prescriptions.
6. Either the family or the school staff may recognize the need to establish the routine.
7. Everyone involved in the training program should expect the process to take a long period of time and be prepared to provide emotional support to each other.
8. It is helpful for the family and the school personnel to keep a daily record for about 2 weeks before beginning the program to establish, if possible, the cues, patterns of elimination and the foods and fluid intake.
9. All caregivers should be aware of the effects of illness, medication, changes in the environment on elimination patterns and the warning sign of problems.

#### **B. Purpose of the Bowel/Bladder Training Program**

- Purpose - To establish and maintain a routine time, place and method of emptying the student's bowel and bladder in order to improve and maintain the health, self-esteem and acceptance of the student.

#### **C. Equipment**

- Varies according to the needs of the student and the doctor's prescriptions if necessary.

#### **D. Personnel Recommendation**

- In the school setting the procedures may be provided by or under the supervision of a registered nurse.