# COVID-19 Vaccine Rates Among People with Spinal Cord Injury and Dysfunction


## Defining the Issue

Physical limitations and other mobility challenges can make the COVID-19 vaccine difficult to access. People living with spinal cord injury and dysfunction (SCI/D), may have multiple existing health conditions and resource limitations that were further worsened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**We set out to understand the rates of COVID-19 vaccination in the SCI/D population in Ontario and potential factors influencing uptake**

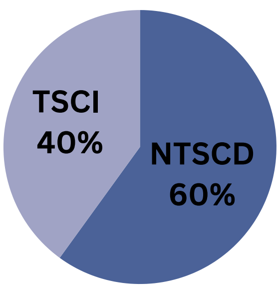
## What did we do to understand this issue?

We used provincial health administrative data[1] from December 2020 to December 2023 to identify COVID-19 vaccine doses for individuals with:

- **traumatic spinal cord injury (TSCI; e.g. from car accidents, falls)** and
- **non-traumatic spinal cord dysfunction (NTSCD; e.g. from degenerative diseases, tumours)**

We also looked at: **age, sex, postal code,** and **medications** (to identify mental health conditions).

## What did we find out?




TSCI = Traumatic Spinal Cord Injury
NTSCD = Non-traumatic Spinal Cord Dysfunction

## We identified a group of over 3500 individuals with SCI/D:

- COVID-19 vaccination rates for individuals with SCI/D in Ontario were similar to the general population in Ontario and Canada, demonstrating little vaccine hesitancy.
- 83% of individuals with SCI/D had full vaccination (2 doses).
- 66% of individuals with SCI/D received additional doses (boosters).
- **People with NTSCD** had a higher vaccine uptake than **people with TSCI**.
- Sex and mental health conditions were not related to full vaccination, but people with mental health conditions were less likely to get boosters.

- Higher uptake in individuals of 65 years of age and older, compared to under 65 years old.

- Individuals with no/lower medication use were less likely to receive booster vaccines.
- Individuals with more than 5 medical conditions were more likely to receive a full vaccination than those with less than 5.

- Individuals from lower-income neighbourhoods were less likely to receive the vaccine.

## What are the next steps?

- **Engaging the SCI/D population to plan for future pandemic responses** by understanding how specific factors may impact vaccine uptake, while also addressing barriers to vaccine access.
- **Engaging communities to better understand personal opinions of vaccines and COVID-19 infection**. This may help to promote education/awareness of the virus to encourage people to get vaccinated.
- **Uncovering and understanding inequities leading to lower rates** amongst people from lower-income neighborhoods and experiencing mental health conditions.

[1] We used data from ICES, an independent, non-profit corporation that houses health administrative data in Ontario.

**Full study results:** Mei A., et al. COVID-19 Vaccine Uptake among People with Spinal Cord Injury and Dysfunction in Ontario, Canada: A Population-Based Retrospective Cohort Study. Healthcare (Basel). 2024;12(17):1799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