



DYSREFLEXIA

II. GENERAL INFORMATION

- A. Dysreflexia is a serious medical problem which can occur unpredictably in persons with spinal cord injury above the seventh thoracic level.
- B. Dysreflexia occurs when a painful or uncomfortable stimulus is not perceived by the student. This can result in a sudden elevation of blood pressure which, if untreated, can cause seizures, retinal hemorrhage, or stroke.
- C. Signs and symptoms of dysreflexia are:
 - 1. Pounding headache
 - 2. Nasal stuffiness
 - 3. Sweating and flushing above the level of injury
 - 4. Chills, goose bumps
 - 5. Pallor below level of injury
- D. The three most common stimuli that cause dysreflexia include:
 - 1. Bladder stimulation from over-distention (due to kinked catheter), urinary track infection, spasms, or stones.
 - 2. Bowel stimulation from over-distention (due to constipation, excess gas).
 - 3. Skin stimulation from extreme heat or cold, pressure areas.
- E. It is recommended that a baseline blood pressure be established for each student and recorded. Establish baseline blood pressure as follows:
 - 1. Have student in sitting position.
 - 2. Obtain A.M. and P.M. readings for five consecutive school days.
 - 3. Determine average reading and record in health record. (The individual with quadriplegia will usually have a blood pressure of 90/60 or lower in the sitting position).
- F. A copy of "Dysreflexia Alert Card" (see attached) must be kept with the student at all times (attach to wheelchair). Must be sent with paramedics if they are summoned.

I. PERSONNEL

- A. School Nurse
- B. Designated school personnel under direct or indirect supervision of the school nurse.



DYSREFLEXIA

Student's Name: _____ DOB: _____

Equipment and supplies *(Responsibility of parent/careprovider)	1. Blood pressure cuff and sphygmomanometer. 2. Stethoscope
PROCEDURE	
ESSENTIAL STEPS	KEY POINTS & PRECAUTIONS
1. Determine that student has symptoms of dysreflexia. 2. Keep student in sitting position. 3. Stay with student and send someone to call parent/careprovider and paramedics. 4. Dysreflexia can be caused by the problems listed below. Identify and eliminate the following: a. Full urinary bag b. Kinked catheter tubing c. Plugged inlet to bag d. Tight leg bag straps e. Cold drafts f. Pressure on or pinching of skin 5. If time permits, check blood pressure.	 This position helps lower blood pressure. DO NOT CREDE (manual pressure on bladder) Full bag or kinked tubing may prevent proper drainage. Two fingers should easily fit under strap.