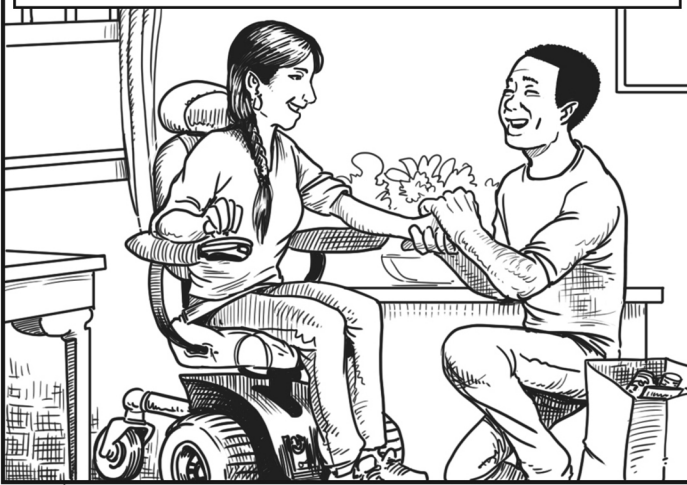
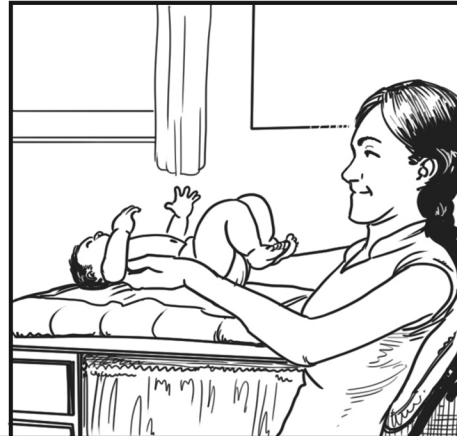
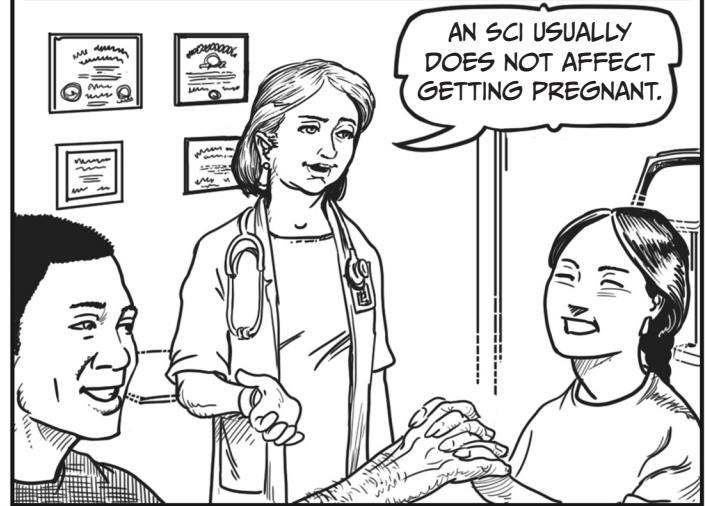


Pregnancy and Women with Spinal Cord Injury (SCI)

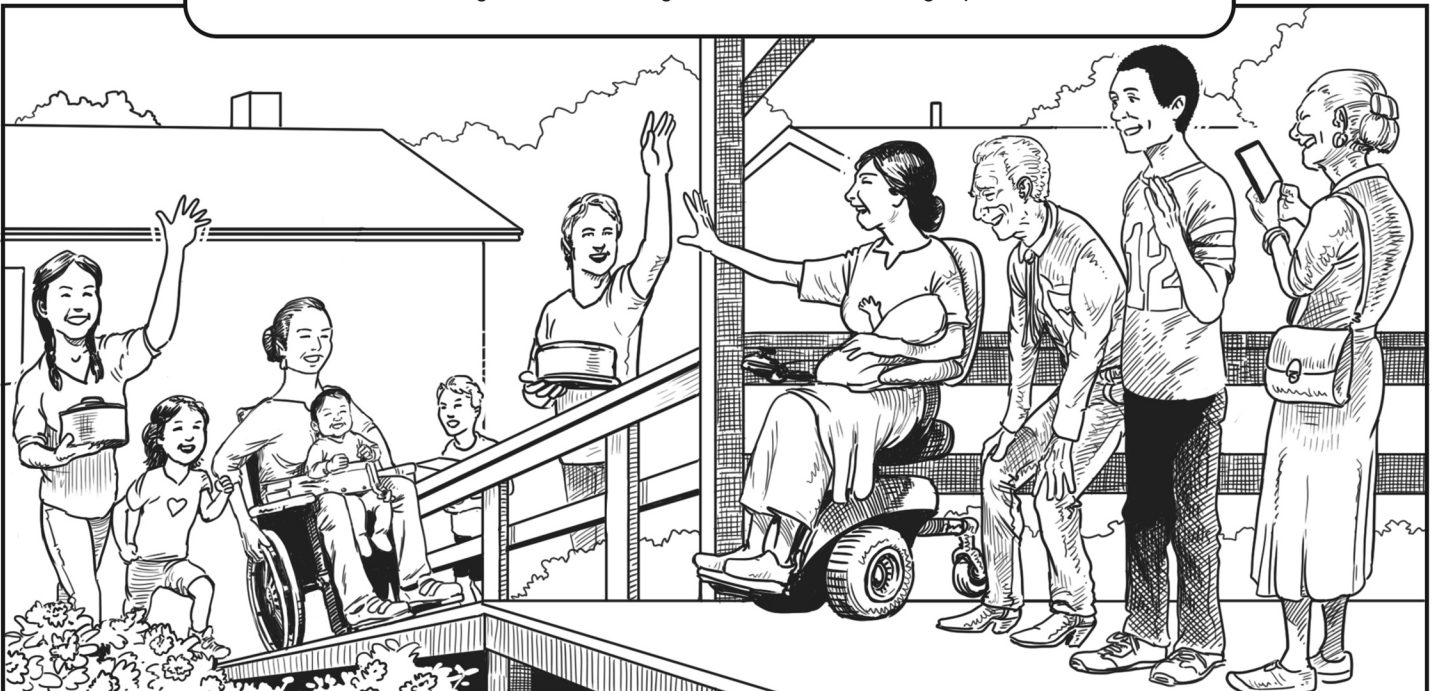
Nina wants to start a family. But she doesn't know if it's OK for women with an SCI to get pregnant. She and her husband decide to visit her doctor, Dr. Smith.



Dr. Smith tells Nina and her husband that an SCI shouldn't keep Nina from getting pregnant and having a baby.



Nina imagines the challenges and rewards of being a parent.



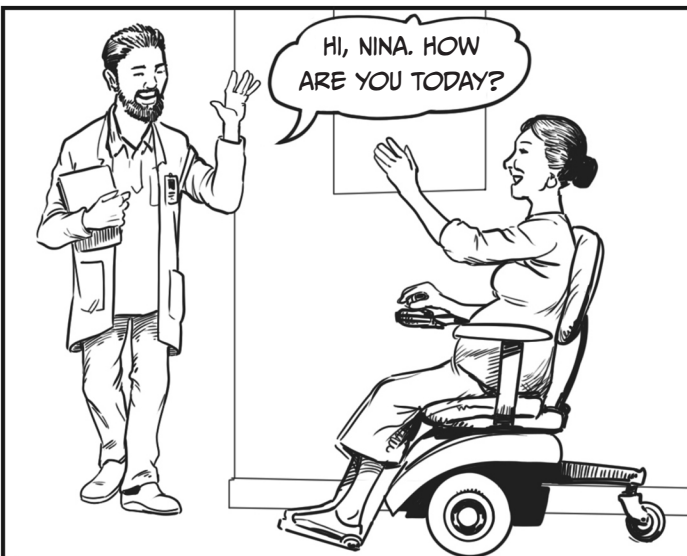
Women with SCI who want to get pregnant should do the following before they get pregnant.



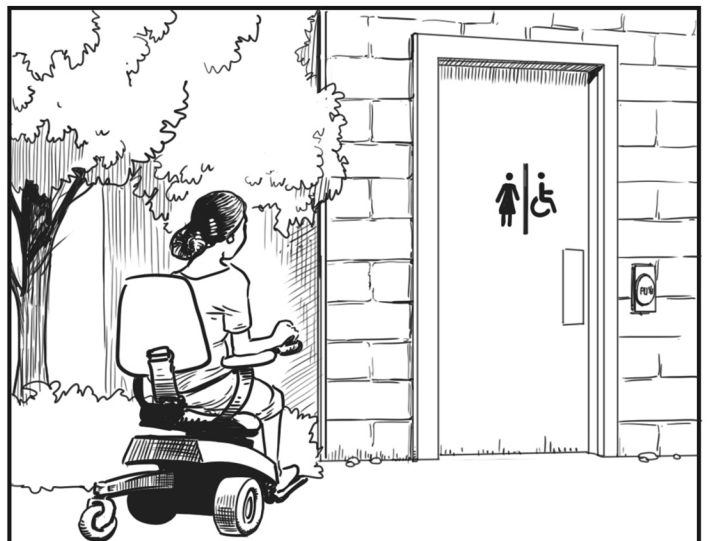
Get a complete GYN exam. This will give you the opportunity to talk with your doctor, get a Pap smear test, review immunizations and discuss family history and screening for genetic testing.



Get your medicines checked. Many medicines should not be taken if you are pregnant or want to get pregnant. Take your medicines with you when you see your obstetrician (OB) or family practitioner who will care for you during pregnancy.



Talk to a SCI clinician such as a physiatrist (also known as a rehab doctor). This doctor will talk to you about your SCI and what it means for your pregnancy, labor, and delivery. Also talk to your rehab doctor about any adjustments to your wheelchair or adaptive equipment. As your baby grows, your wheelchair may need adjustments and further adjustments may be needed once you are caring for your child.

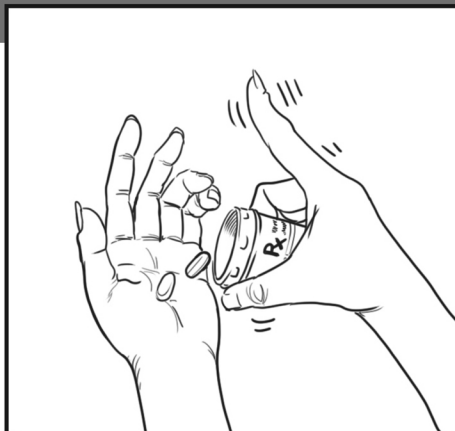


Get your bladder checked. As your baby grows, he or she will press on your bladder. It is important to get a complete check-up of your urinary tract before you get pregnant. This includes your kidneys, bladder, and ureters. Tell your doctor if you are pregnant or think you might be pregnant. Some tests, such as x-rays, can harm your baby.

First Trimester



Autonomic dysreflexia (AD). Nausea and headache may be a sign of AD. An SCI injury level of T6 or above increases the risk of AD. AD is a serious medical condition that must be treated right away!



Urinary tract infection (UTI). A UTI must be treated right away. You may need medicine.



Bowel problems. Your doctor may give you hormone or iron pills during pregnancy. They may cause constipation or diarrhea.

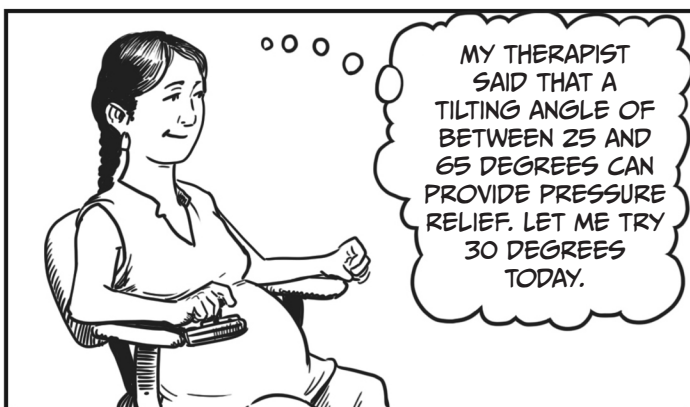
Second Trimester



Daily activities. Weight gain from pregnancy can make it hard to transfer to or from your wheelchair. It can also make it hard to push your wheelchair.



Bladder problems. A growing baby puts pressure on your bladder. Also, your bladder can't hold as much urine as usual.



Skin care. Weight gain from pregnancy can raise the risk of pressure injuries. You have to be extra careful to protect your skin.



Muscle spasms. Muscle spasms may develop or get worse.

Third Trimester



Breathing. A growing baby pushes on your diaphragm. This can make it harder to breathe, take deep breaths, and cough. You may talk to a respiratory therapist to find ways to improve your breathing.



Blood flow. Pressure from a growing baby can slow blood flow to your legs and feet, causing swelling. If you have had blood clots before, talk to your OB about medicine to keep clots from forming. See a physical therapist for exercises to improve blood flow.



Having a spinal cord injury (SCI) does not affect your ability to naturally become pregnant, carry, and deliver a baby, so your decision to have children is made in much the same way as anyone else. Talk to your OB to plan and decide on the type of delivery that is best for you.

Source: The Content of this infocomic has been adapted from the factsheet Pregnancy and Women After Spinal Cord Injury (<https://msktc.org/sci/factsheets/Pregnancy>), which was developed by Amie B. McLain, M.D., Taylor Massengill, B.A., and Phil Klebine, M.A., in collaboration with the SCI Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center. It was illustrated by Marty Two Bulls Sr.

Our health information content is based on research evidence whenever available and represents the consensus of expert opinion of the SCI Model System directors.

Disclaimer: This information is not meant to replace the advice of a medical professional. You should consult your health care provider about specific medical concerns or treatment. The contents of this infocomic were developed under grants from the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR grant numbers 90DP0082 and 90DPKT0009). NIDILRR is a Center within the Administration for Community Living (ACL), Department of Health and Human Services (HHS). The contents of this infocomic do not necessarily represent the policy of NIDILRR, ACL, HHS, and you should not assume endorsement by the federal government.

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