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Dear GP

Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) is the patient voice for the 50,000 people paralysed by spinal cord injury (SCI). We are aware that despite official guidance there continues to be some concern and ambiguity about the priority to be given to people with spinal cord injuries in the current booster vaccination programme.

The Government's guidance on vaccination in the Green Book clearly recognises that "severe neurological disability" of which spinal cord injury is a significant part, is amongst the clinical risk groups who should receive COVID-19 booster vaccines. Accordingly, those with spinal cord injuries should be considered as having "chronic neurological disease including epilepsy", in line with the JCVI advice.

1. Many people with a spinal cord injury whose age does not place them in a higher group should be prioritised into Group 4 - All those 70 years of age and/or clinically extremely vulnerable. Those with tetraplegia and high-level paraplegia (T8 and above) resulting in a weakened cough reflex should be considered in the group the JCVI interprets as "chronic respiratory disease, including chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), cystic fibrosis and severe asthma", and therefore as clinically extremely vulnerable.
2. In addition, those who acquired their spinal cord injury through an autoimmune condition i.e. Transverse Myelitis, Guillain-Barre Syndrome, Metastatic Spinal Cord Compression or Spinal Tumour, may have an impaired or compromised immune system and would also be clinically extremely vulnerable, as they would be at greater risk of serious infection.
3. All other people with a spinal cord injury should be categorised in Group 6 – An underlying health condition that puts them at greater risk of disease or mortality for the vaccine.

 [SpinalInjuriesAssociation](https://www.facebook.com/SpinalInjuriesAssociation)  [@spinalinjuries](https://twitter.com/spinalinjuries)

SIA relies on fundraising, donations and gifts in wills to provide services that help spinal cord injured people rebuild their lives.

For those with a spinal cord injury, any illness, particularly those that lead to hospitalisation can risk the emergence of a variety of other complications related to bowel, bladder, and skin along with the increased risk of opportunistic infections. Your support in prioritising people with spinal cord injuries will help reduce the risk of serious illness from the continued threat of Covid-19 and along with associated life threatening physical and psychological effects for your patient.

Please do not hesitate to contact Spinal Injuries Association if you wish to discuss further on 0800 980 0501.



Debbie Green
SCI Specialist Nurse

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