

# The Spinal Cord System Of Care (SCSC) Programme at the NRH

Pre-admission information about the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme





Spinal cord injury or dysfunction may result from traumatic injury (such as an accident) or non-traumatic injury, for example, medical conditions such as spinal cord tumours, vascular or inflammatory disorders, or demyelination.

The SCSC Programme also includes the management of patients with conditions known as peripheral neuropathies, such as Guillain Barré Syndrome, as similar principles of rehabilitation apply to these conditions.

## Pre-admission information about the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme

The National Rehabilitation Hospital has developed a 'continuum of care' (the Spinal Cord System of Care (SCSC) Programme) for people with spinal cord injury or dysfunction. This ensures that patients can receive the most suitable programme of care based on their individual rehabilitation needs.

The Spinal Cord System of Care Programme includes:

- The **Inpatient** Rehabilitation phase
- The **Outpatient** phase, and
- Links to **Community Services**

The NRH receives medical referrals from hospitals, doctors (GPs), and other HSE services nationwide. Persons with spinal cord injury or dysfunction have many needs and may face wide-ranging long-term restrictions in their ability to live independently.

The spinal cord system of care at the NRH is designed to assist patients, along with their family or carers, to achieve the following aims:-

- to adjust to their injury
- to achieve the safest possible level of physical independence
- to participate socially and in the community

The programme aims to discharge all patients after they have achieved their rehabilitation goals and gained maximum benefit from their treatment plan.

## Frequently Asked Questions By Patients Coming To The NRH

### What can I do before admission to the NRH?

Begin applying for your Medical Card as soon as possible; this will be needed if you require specialist equipment. Ask your doctor for an up to date copy of your prescription. Bring this prescription and all your medications with you on the day of your admission. Some of your own medications may be used while you are in the NRH.

### What makes the NRH different from other hospitals?

Other hospitals treat medical conditions or illnesses and aim to discharge patients within a short time following treatment. At the NRH, the focus is to provide personalised treatment plans dedicated to helping patients to achieve the safest level of independence possible. Patients being admitted to the NRH must be medically stable. Each person referred is assessed to ensure that participating in an intensive rehabilitation programme is suitable treatment for them, based on their clinical need.



### How long before I can get in?

Your admission depends on a number of factors including your diagnosis, your readiness to undertake rehabilitation and the availability of a bed in the particular service you require. At times there can be significant waiting lists.

**The average waiting time for admission to the NRH Spinal Cord System of Care Programme in 2025 was 79 days.**

### How long will I stay there?

During the first two weeks the focus is on assessment and how the team can identify how best to help you to maximise your independence. Short term and long-term goals will be set to help create a rehabilitation programme specific to you.

After this period of assessment, a more intensive treatment programme will begin. A discharge date is usually set around two weeks after your admission. Lengths of stay can vary greatly from two-week assessments to very significant lengths of stay for patients where complications arise.

**The average length of stay for patients in the SCSC Programme in 2025 was 100 days.**

### **What recovery can I expect to make?**

It may be that life into the future is different for you and your family, but the expertise of the rehabilitation team at the NRH will help you and your family in adjusting to that changed future. Staff at the NRH will take every opportunity to make the most of all possibilities for you to achieve health and social gain. The most effective way to reach your rehabilitation goals is by participating in your scheduled treatment and education sessions.

### **What will I do in the NRH?**

The day in the NRH is usually organised between time spent on your unit, attending therapies, and participating in recreational activities. Therapies are usually scheduled over 6 days. Unit routines can begin early and therapies can be scheduled up to 8pm.

### **How much physiotherapy will I get at the NRH?**

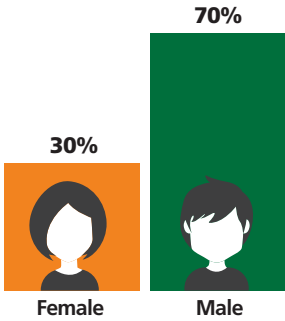
This is a common question for people with spinal cord injury to ask. Sometimes people think that rehabilitation is only about physiotherapy and think that the more physiotherapy they receive, the better. However, physiotherapy only forms a part of the rehabilitation programme for those with spinal cord injury.

Other aspects of your rehabilitation may be equally important for you, such as education from your nurse regarding your bowel care; a treatment session with your psychologist, occupational therapist or speech and language therapist; therapeutic weekend leave to your home, or planning for final discharge with your social worker.

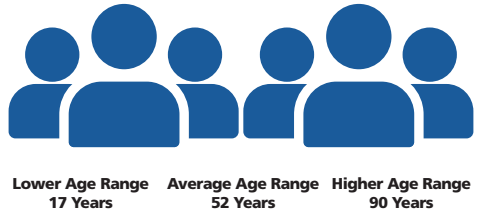
## What is the typical age range and gender of people admitted to the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme?

In 2025 the breakdown of patients admitted to the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme was 30% female and 70% male. The age range was 17 - 90 years old.

**Gender of Patients admitted to the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme in 2025**



**Age Profile of Patients admitted to the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme in 2025**



## What do I need to bring with me on admission?

A checklist of items you need to bring is listed below:

- Everyday Items you may use, for example, reading glasses, hearing aid, walking aid or communication aid. If you have a wheelchair, bring your cushions and both foot plates.
- Clothing – comfortable clothing such as:
  - tracksuit or slacks (3 pairs)
  - warm loose-fitting jacket
  - jumpers or T-shirts
  - underwear and socks or tights
  - shoes - comfortable shoes or runners (ideally not new ones)
  - pyjamas or nightwear (non-flammable material), and slippers
- Toiletries – you will need these on an ongoing basis
  - toothbrush and paste
  - facecloth, soap and shampoo
  - roll-on deodorant (not sprays)
  - shaving cream and razor
- Medications and up-to-date prescriptions
- Medical Card
- PPS Number
- Details about any allergies you may have
- Details of special dietary requirements
- Other items you may use every day, for example, smartphone or computer tablet

Please keep personal belongings to a minimum. Your locker will be emptied and cleaned weekly to maintain our hygiene standards.

We advise that you do not bring in valuables, jewellery or money with you on admission.

## Where do I go after discharge from the NRH?

The aim is for 75% of patients to be discharged home when they have completed their rehabilitation programme. Some patients will be unable to go directly home from the NRH because of certain care needs. For example, if they are waiting for housing adaption, special equipment, or appointment of carers.

## Intensity of Services at the NRH

Intensity of services means how much and how often services will be provided to patients within their Programme. This will vary depending on each individual's assessment. Rehabilitation nursing services are provided around the clock and relevant therapies will be planned for according to patients' clinical needs.

You will take part in treatment for approximately 15 hours over the week. This may include: one-to-one treatment, group treatment with other patients, education sessions to help you understand your condition, carer training (for you and your support network), peer support, unit rounds with interdisciplinary team (IDT), prescribed independent practice and family meetings.

## Visiting Hours\*

<b>Monday to Sunday</b>	5.45pm – 7.45pm
<b>Saturday, Sunday &amp; Bank Holidays</b>	2.00pm – 4.00pm (apart from mealtimes)

**\*Note:** Visiting hours may be impacted during times when there is an outbreak or pandemic. Please check [www.nrh.ie](http://www.nrh.ie) for up to date information and whether visits need to be booked.

## Protected Mealtimes

The NRH operates 'Protected Mealtimes', visitors are asked to avoid coming to see patients during mealtimes, unless they are helping a patient with their meal. Visitors must leave the unit during mealtimes but may remain on the hospital premises.

## Patient Satisfaction – Your Opinion Matters

Feedback provided by patients, families, carers and visitors is valued and appreciated as it helps us to continually improve our services. There are various ways to give us feedback about your experience of the NRH, including:-

- **Comments & Suggestions** forms which are available throughout the hospital. Patients, families and visitors are encouraged to give their feedback. Please ask any staff member if you need any assistance in finding or completing the forms.
- Feedback may be given verbally to any member of staff.
- The **Monthly Patient Forum** is an opportunity for patients to connect with others and stay updated on the latest developments at the NRH. It is also an opportunity for patients and family members to give feedback and suggestions or voice concerns about any aspect of our services. The forum is held once a month. Please ask a member of staff for more information.
- Information leaflets explaining our **Comments and Complaints Procedure** are available throughout the hospital.
- An independent consumer survey (uSPEQ) is sent by post to all patients approximately 3 months following discharge from the Inpatient Programme.
- Feedback may be given by visiting '**Have your Say**' on our website [www.nrh.ie](http://www.nrh.ie) or by sending an email to [patientexperience@nrh.ie](mailto:patientexperience@nrh.ie).

If you would like to raise a concern, or need assistance with the Comments and Complaints Procedure, ask a member of your rehabilitation team to contact the Patient Experience and Healthcare Data Manager on your behalf or email [patientexperience@nrh.ie](mailto:patientexperience@nrh.ie).

## The NRH Values Your Health

In line with Government Policy, the National Rehabilitation Hospital is a smoke free campus.

**Making Every Contact Count (MECC)** is a HSE Programme which is available to all NRH Patients and is delivered by NRH staff who have been trained in the programme.

The MECC programme:

- Focuses on chronic disease prevention
- Supports patients in making positive changes to their physical and mental health and wellbeing

The programme will offer you supports in the following areas and in line with your health needs and goals:

- Tobacco use
- Alcohol and drug use
- Health eating
- Physical activity
- Overweight and obesity
- Mental health and wellbeing

Please ask your nurse or therapist if you are interested in any of these topics. You may ask to speak with a 'Stop Smoking Advisor' for support. Information sessions will also be available for patients to attend.



# The Spinal Cord System Of Care (SCSC) Programme

## Effectiveness, Efficiency and Access to the Programme

Through seeking CARF\* international accreditation, the NRH has shown its commitment to steady and continuous improvement in its service delivery. It puts in place various improvement plans which allow us to measure the access to, efficiency and effectiveness of the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme.

\* Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities

For patients admitted to the Spinal Cord System of Care Programme, a measure of their independence is taken at both admission to and discharge from the Programme. This enables the Rehabilitation Team to measure the improvement that patients have made in their functional ability during their stay (for example, practical skill and ability to manage their needs and care, or ability to direct a carer to do so).

## Activity and Outcomes for Inpatient Services

A total of 159 persons were discharged in 2025 from the NRH **Spinal Cord System of Care (SCSC)** Inpatient Programme.

The NRH is a fully publicly funded voluntary hospital and operates under its mission and ethos of providing high quality care and treatment to patients irrespective of background or status, but on the basis of clinical need.

# Contact details for: The Spinal Cord System of Care Programme

## Administration:

(01) 235 5145 • (01) 235 5528 • (01) 235 5537



An tOspidéal Náisiúnta Athshlánúcháin

## National Rehabilitation Hospital

Rochestown Avenue,  
Dun Laoghaire,  
Co. Dublin,  
A96 RPN4

**NRH SC 017**

**Tel:** +353 1 235 5000

**Email:** [enquiries@nrh.ie](mailto:enquiries@nrh.ie)

**[www.nrh.ie](http://www.nrh.ie)**