

FREE RESOURCE · ADAPTIVE MOVEMENT

Adaptive Seated Yoga for SCI

A 15-minute wheelchair-friendly practice for posture, shoulder health, and calm. Move only in ways that feel right for your body today.

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Before you start

Lock your wheels. Use your chest strap or armrests if you need them.

Go slowly between positions. Pause if you feel lightheaded.

Check your hand and arm position with your eyes if feeling is limited.

Stop and follow your AD plan if...

You notice a pounding headache, flushing, sweating, or goosebumps above your injury level (injuries at T6 and above). Sit upright, loosen tight clothing, check bladder, bowel, and skin. Get emergency help if it doesn't settle.



1

Grounded breath

One hand on your chest, one on your belly. Breathe in through your nose, out slowly through pursed lips.

8 breaths



2

Sit tall

Wheels locked. Find your tallest seat — tall for *your* body. Imagine a string lifting the top of your head.

4 breaths



3

Open & round — move with your breath

Breathe in: elbows bend into goal-post "cactus" arms, chest lifts, shoulder blades squeeze together.

Breathe out: forearms come together, upper back rounds, chin drops gently.

Repeat 6–8 times. Undoes the forward-rounded pushing posture.



4

Side reach

Hold your armrest or wheel with one hand. Reach the other arm up and over. Feel the side of your body lengthen.

3 breaths each side



5

Gentle twist

Sit tall, then turn your upper body to one side, hand to the armrest. Keep it smooth and easy.

3 breaths each side



6

Self-hug stretch

Cross your arms and hug your shoulders. Let your upper back widen like a balloon. Switch which arm is on top.

4 breaths each way

7

Wrist & hand care

Slow wrist circles, then open and close your hands (or your usual tenodesis pattern). Your hands do heavy work all day — care for them like an athlete.

5–8 each



8

Rest & body scan

Eyes soft or closed. Notice your body from head down, kindly — including areas with less feeling. Set one intention for your day.

1–3 minutes

+

Pressure-relief breathing

Keep your usual weight-shift schedule during practice. Pair each shift — forward, left, right — with 3 slow breaths. Two healthy habits at once.

Make it a habit

Link your practice to something you already do every day: *"After my morning transfer, I do my 15 minutes."* Five minutes most days does more than an hour once in a while.

Photos are from my chair yoga classes; the same movements work in a wheelchair with the wheels locked.

LEARN MORE

- **MSKTC.org** — free SCI factsheets on exercise, autonomic dysreflexia, and shoulder care
- **Christopher & Dana Reeve Foundation** — christopherreeve.org
- **SCI exercise guidelines** — sciactioncanada.ok.ubc.ca

KEY EVIDENCE

- Martin Ginis KA, et al. Spinal Cord. 2018;56:308–321 (SCI exercise guidelines).
- Curtis K, et al. J Pain Res. 2017;10:999–1017 (adapted yoga for SCI, pilot RCT).
- Consortium for Spinal Cord Medicine: autonomic dysreflexia & upper-limb preservation guidelines.
- Lally P, et al. Eur J Soc Psychol. 2010;40:998–1009 (habit formation).

Make it personal: take the free 60-second quiz or book a **free consultation** at wholelivingwithnikki.com — services are pay what you can.

Educational wellness information, not medical advice or treatment. Check with your care team before starting new activity and follow your SCI team's precautions. Stop if you feel pain, dizziness, chest pressure, or shortness of breath.