Spinal Cord Infarction

Spinal cord infarction is a stroke either within the spinal cord or the arteries that supply it.

CAUSES

It is caused by arteriosclerosis or a thickening or closing of the major arteries to the spinal cord. Often spinal cord infarction is caused by a specific form of arteriosclerosis. It is called *atheromatosis*. In it, a deposit or accumulation of lipid-containing matter forms within the arteries.

SYMPTOMS

Symptoms generally appear within minutes or a few hours of the infarction. They may include:

- Sharp or burning back pain off and on.
- Aching pain down through the legs.
- Weakness in the legs.
- Paralysis.
- Loss of deep tendon reflexes.
- Loss of pain and temperature sensation.
- Incontinence.

TREATMENT

Treatment is symptomatic. Physical and occupational therapy may help individuals recover from weakness or paralysis. A catheter may be needed for patients with urinary incontinence.

Recovery depends upon:

- How quickly treatment is received.
- How severely the body is compromised.

Paralysis may last for many weeks or be permanent. Most individuals have a good chance of recovery.

RESEARCH BEING DONE

NINDS conducts and supports research on disorders of the spinal cord such as spinal cord infarction. It is aimed at learning more about these disorders and finding ways to prevent and treat them.

Research is continually being done to learn more about this problem.

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