

Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation

Patients with spinal cord injury (SCI) travel from all over the world for treatment at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. For decades, we have been a world-renown leader in treating a wide range of functional impairments related to SCI. Our team of specialists evaluates and works with patients from pre-admission to discharge, enabling them to monitor progress, adapt therapies and better anticipate the future and potential for recovery.



Recognized as 1 of 5 Spinal Cord Injury Model Centers in the nation.



Cutting-edge technology including:

- Armeo: Upper-Extremity Robot for reaching and hand function
- Lokomat: Robotic gait trainer that can be used early in recovery
- ESKO: Robotic exoskeleton used for gait training
- Hand and leg bikes stimulate muscles through advanced electrodes and sensors
- Advanced harness system allows patients to climb stairs and walk safely around the entire circumference of the treatment ability lab



Research in areas that help promote maximal recovery and function following a spinal cord injury, including:

- Stem cell research
- Spasticity research
- Smart wheelchair research
- Walking devices and Exoskeleton development

Our doctors, researchers and therapy team work with you to help you achieve your best possible outcome. Working together, these leaders meet daily on your goals and provide you with the most innovative technology and treatments.

We have many resources to help you increase your mobility — in-house therapists who specialize in wheelchair seating systems, prosthetics and orthotics, assistive technology and recreational therapy.

In addition, Shirley Ryan AbilityLab can meet all respiratory needs for patients with a spinal cord injury. A few of our innovative programs include the Ventilator Liberation Program, diaphragmatic pacing and respiratory muscle training, all which help you maximize respiratory function.



Meet Our Medical Leader

David Chen, MD • Section Chief, Spinal Cord Injury

Dr. Chen is the Section Chief of Spinal Cord Injury and George M. Eisenberg Foundation Chair in Spinal Cord Injury at Shirley Ryan AbilityLab. He is board certified in physical medicine and rehabilitation with a subspecialty in spinal cord medicine. Dr. Chen has been the director of the program for more than 25 years and leads the Midwest Regional Spinal Cord Injury Center. An associate professor at Northwestern University Feinberg School of Medicine, Dr. Chen has published more than 35 research articles and has authored 10 chapters in medical textbooks.