

### **Note for caregivers:**

For children younger than age 5, the test will be completed in a way that the child can understand. The results may not be accurate until a child is at least age 10.

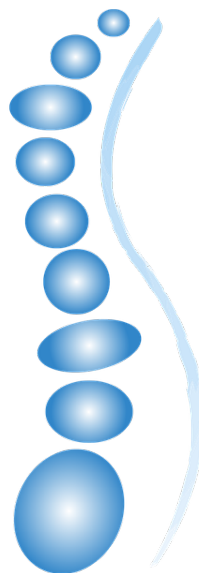
### **Helpful Tips**

- The test usually takes one to two hours to complete and requires you to concentrate. Please ask for breaks when needed.
- You will be asked to close your eyes at times. Be sure to stay awake!
- You will be asked to try to move your arms and legs during the test, even if you think you cannot move them.
- If you are not sure if you can or cannot feel the safety pin or cotton, please do not guess.
- For most children, we ask that your parent or caregiver be present unless you ask not to have a parent present.



### **For More Information:**

**American Spinal Injury Association**  
<http://asia-spinalinjury.org/information/>



## **The ISNCSCI Exam**



### **What is the ASIA (or ISNCSCI) Exam?**

The International Standards for the  
Neurological Classification of Spinal Cord  
Injury – What Young Patients Want to Know



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## **What is the ISNCSCI?**

The International Standards for Neurological Classification of Spinal Cord Injury (ISNCSCI) is a tool used to help healthcare providers determine the level of your spinal cord injury (SCI) and whether the injury is “complete” or “incomplete.” During the ISNCSCI exam (sometimes called the “ASIA” test), the healthcare provider will test where on your body you can feel and which muscles you can move. Your test will tell you, your family, and your healthcare providers the level of your injury and the ASIA Impairment Scale (AIS) “grade” of your injury, which tells whether your injury is complete or incomplete.

## **Who will perform the test?**

A healthcare provider such as a doctor, a physical therapist, or an occupational therapist will usually perform the exam.

## **What to Expect:**

The test includes a sensory exam, a muscle strength exam, and a rectal exam. You will be lying on your back during most of the test. You may be asked to roll to your side when the sensation is tested on your buttocks.

## **Sensory Exam:**

28 sensory points will be tested on both sides of your body with a cotton swab and a pin. The tester will first show you on your face what each touch feels like.

## **Light Touch:**

You will be tested using a cotton swab.

## **Sharp/Dull Discrimination:**

You will be tested using a safety pin. You will be asked if you can tell the difference between the sharp end of the pin and the rounded (dull) end of the pin.

## **Motor Exam:**

The strength of 5 muscles in each arm and each leg will be tested. Other muscles in your arms and legs may be tested if needed.

## **Rectal Exam:**

The tester will check to see if you have sensation in this area and will test if you can squeeze the muscles in this area. This is a very important part of this test that shows if your injury is complete or incomplete.

## **How is the exam scored?**

- The strength in your arms and legs will be tested and scored as normal, impaired (weak), or absent.
- Your sensation will be tested at specific points on your body and scored as normal, impaired (present but not normal), or absent.

## **Is your injury complete or incomplete?**

If you have no muscle movement or sensation in parts of your body that receive nerves from the end of your spinal cord, your injury is called “complete.” If you have sensation or muscle movement in these areas, your injury is called “incomplete.” Your healthcare provider will do a rectal exam to help answer this question.

## **What does the AIS grade mean?**

### **Complete (A):**

No muscle movement or sensation are present in or around your rectum.

### **Sensory Incomplete (B):**

Sensation is present in or around your rectum, but you have very little or no muscle movement below your level of injury.

### **Motor Incomplete (C):**

Muscle movement is present below the level of your injury.

### **Motor Incomplete (D):**

Muscle movement is present below the level of your injury, and the muscles are stronger than needed for a grade of C.

### **Normal (E):**

All tested muscle movements and sensation have returned to normal as before your injury.

## **Can your score change?**

Your score may change if your muscle strength or sensation changes. The score may also change as you get older and can better participate in the test. For these reasons, the test is usually given when you are first admitted to the hospital with an SCI, and again before you leave the hospital. It is usually repeated one time per year after that, or if there are any changes in your strength or sensation.