

## Spina Bifida

Our vision is that people with Spina Bifida and/or Hydrocephalus will participate to their fullest potential in all aspects of life.

Taken from SBHI's (Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus Ireland) Goals  
<http://www.sbhi.ie/>

Spina bifida is a defect in the spinal column in which one or more vertebrae fail to form properly, leaving a gap that can result in damage to the central nervous system. Those born with spina bifida may need surgery and other extensive medical care owing to the paralysis that may result from damage to the spinal cord. Spina bifida may also be associated with bowel and bladder complications. A large percentage born with spina bifida also present with hydrocephalus (an accumulation of fluid in the brain).

There are three main types of spina bifida: spina bifida occulta (hidden); spina bifida cystica (cystlike); and cranium bifida. The one most likely to present with physical disability is spina bifida cystica. There are two forms: meningocele, the least common form of spina bifida, where the nerves are usually not badly damaged and are able to function, and myelomeningocele, the most common form of spina bifida and also the most serious, where there is always some degree of paralysis and loss of sensation. With myelomeningocele, the amount of disability depends on where the spina bifida is and the amount of nerve damage involved. Students with this condition are invariably wheelchair users and many experience problems with bowel and bladder control.

The student with spina bifida can have co-ordination and perception difficulties that will affect his/her learning. Short-term memory, speech and vision difficulties may also be present. However, one must remember that wide variations exist with regard to the needs of each individual student.

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