



PRECAUTIONS FOLLOWING BACK SURGERY

DO NOT BEND, LIFT, TWIST OR PULL (6-12 WEEKS)

- **DO NOT CARRY MORE THAN 5LBS FOR 6 WEEKS FOLLOWING BACK SURGERY (4 WEEKS FOR DISCECTOMY/KYPHECTOMY)**
5LBS IS ABOUT ONE 2L MILK CARTON OR 2L BOTTLE OF POP
- **DO NOT CARRY MORE THAN 10LBS FOR 6 MORE WEEKS AFTER THAT (WEEKS 7-12 POST OPERATION)**
- **IF YOUR SURGEON PRESCRIBES A BRACE, IT SHOULD BE WORN MOST OF THE TIME, ESPECIALLY TO MOBILIZE AND WHILE STANDING**

Note: The brace sits low and can get in the way of toileting, so can be left off for trips to the washroom.

- **USE THE LOG ROLL METHOD TO GET OUT OF BED**
- **MOBILIZE EARLY AND CHANGE POSITIONS REGULARLY**
- **USE PAIN AS YOUR GUIDE**

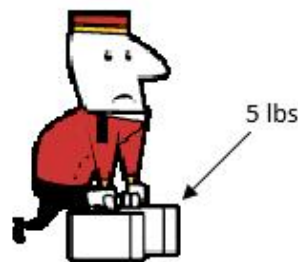


Figure 1: No bending, lifting, or twisting x 6-12 weeks following back surgery

ACTIVITIES OF DAILY LIVING

GETTING IN AND OUT OF BED

Getting up: Use the log roll method. Lying on your back, bring your knees up and place a pillow between your legs, keep your body straight and roll over on your side to face the side of the bed you plan to get out of. Place your legs over the edge of the bed and use your arms to push yourself up to a seated position. Slide your buttocks to the edge of the bed and then stand up, keeping your back as straight as possible.

Lying down: Sit on the edge of the bed with a pillow placed between your knees. Aim the tip of your shoulder for the pillow and slowly lower yourself down onto your side. Bring your legs up. You may then hike your hips back to remain in a side lying position or log roll onto your back.

Make sure that you have the things you need within reach. Gather items such as medications, eyeglasses, reading material, and other things you may want. Be sure to place them so you won't have to twist your back to reach them. If you are not able to gather the items yourself, ask a family member or friend to help.

Bed risers can be used to raise the bed to an optimal height just above knee level while standing.

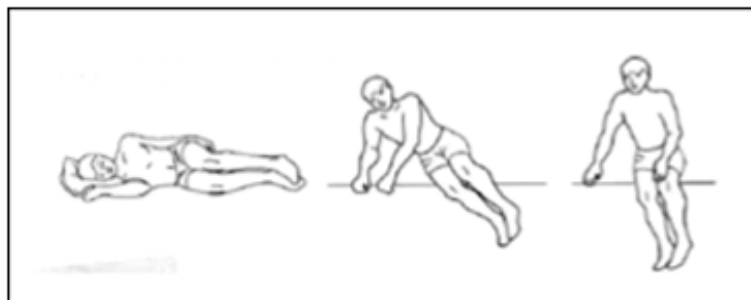


Figure 2: Use the log roll method (shown above) when getting in and out of bed to protect your back following surgery.

USING THE TOILET

Most regular toilet seats are low, and a raised toilet seat is often recommended to avoid pressure and injury in the surgery area. Check the shape and size of your toilet seat before ordering a raised seat or toilet safety frame. A commode may also be useful. You may also want to have a grab bar installed on a wall beside the toilet. Make sure toilet paper and

hygiene products are within reach and in front of the toilet to avoid bending and twisting.

BATHING

It is important to keep your dressing dry to ensure healing of the incision.

DO NOT SIT on the bottom of the bathtub, since getting up from this low position would involve pulling and bending. Sponge bathing is recommended rather than showering for the first 7 days after surgery.

Then you may use a tub transfer bench with a handheld shower.

Use a long-handled sponge if you want to wash below the knee. Make sure you have a non-slip surface in your tub. You may need to have a grab bar installed. Be cautious if using suction cup grab bars, as these can detach from wall unexpectedly. When stepping into the tub, be sure to bend at the hip and knee to clear the tub. Make sure you do not bend forward to turn on the taps or wash your feet. You may also stand to shower if you feel comfortable. Again, remember not to bend to reach your soap or shampoo (a shower caddy hanging from your shower head will be very useful).

Use a hand-held shower to wash your hair, or bend at the knees and hips under the shower head to avoid arching your back. To avoid bending, use a long-handled scrub brush. For tasks that require you to bend towards a counter (like washing hair in a sink or brushing your teeth), make sure you take a step forward and stand with one foot in front of the other to protect your back.



Figure 3: A tub transfer bench (shown above) can help with transfers in/out of a tub-shower and provide a seat while showering.

GETTING DRESSED

Do not bend over to get clothes out of drawers. Have your clothes laid out close to where you will be dressing or get someone to help you. You may

find it easier to lie on your back to get your clothes on and off. Bend one leg at a time toward your chest. Loose fitting clothes and slip-on shoes are easier to get on and off. You should wear shoes with padded soles to cut back on shock from hard floors. If you are seated and able, bring each foot up to meet the opposite knee to put on pants and socks. A long-handled reacher, sock-aid, and long-handled shoehorn allow you to put on these items without bending. Your occupational therapist can tell you about the use of these items and where to get them.

Putting On Pants: If you cannot bring your feet to meet your hands without bending at the waist, please refer to the following instructions:

- Sit on a chair or the side of the bed.
- Using a reacher, catch the waist of the underwear or pants.
- Slip the pants onto your legs.
- Use the reacher to pull the pants over your feet and above your knee.
- Pull them to where you can reach them with your hands.
- Hold the pants with one hand. Push up from the chair to stand.
- With your hands, pull the pants the rest of the way up.

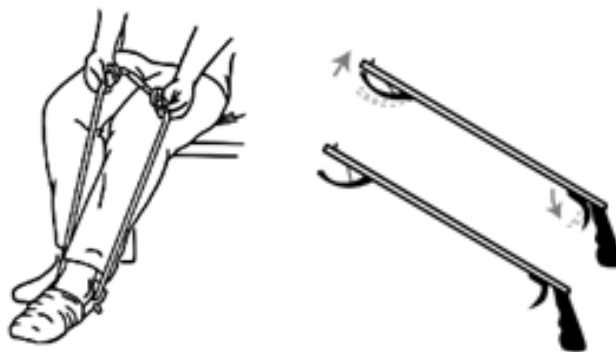


Figure 4: A sock aid (left) and long handled reacher (right) can be used to assist with dressing following surgery.

Taking Your Clothes OFF:

- While standing, pull your pants and underwear down to your knees. Do not bend over.
- Sit down and then use a reacher to get pants, underwear and shoes/socks off.

SITTING

Sit in a high firm straight-back chair with arm rests. Arm rests will help you to get up.

Check seat heights before you sit down. The chair seat should be higher than the back crease of your knee when standing in front of it. You can make a chair higher by putting blocks under the legs or use a firm cushion. Try not to use reclining chairs, rocking chairs, stools, and low soft couches.

Try not to bend forward while sitting or as you sit down/stand up. Make sure your feet are flat on the floor use a telephone book for under your feet if they do not touch the floor. Use a reacher to pick things off the floor or from above your head. **DO NOT BEND OR TWIST TO REACH THINGS.**

To sit down: Back up to the chair. Brace your stomach muscles, bend at the hips, and use your leg muscles to lower yourself onto the front of the chair. Then scoot back.

To stand up: Scoot to the front of the chair. Brace your stomach muscles, and place one foot slightly in front of the other. Grasp the sides of the chair or the armrests for support. Bend at the hips and use your leg muscles to push your body up. Keep your ears, shoulders and hips in line.



Figure 5: An image of a person standing from a seated position using a chair with armrests.

REACHING

Get someone to pick things up for you or use a long handled reacher. A pair of kitchen tongs may be used if they are long enough to prevent bending at the waist. Ask someone to get things off shelves that are up high, don't lift your elbows above your shoulders.

CLIMBING AND DESCENDING STAIRS

Go up with the strong leg and down with the affected leg first. Climb stairs one at a time.

Going Upstairs: Stand close to the bottom step. Place your stronger leg up first. Make sure your entire foot is on the step. Then bring the cane and your affected leg up at the same time.

Going Downstairs: Stand close to the step. Place the cane and your affected leg down onto the step. Make sure your entire foot is on the step. Then bring your stronger leg down.

HOME MANAGEMENT

Keep everything within easy reach and use a step stool or reacher to get items from overhead. Use a reacher to get things below knee height. Store food and cookware you use often on the counters or the middle shelves of the refrigerator.

Avoid stooping. If standing in one place for a long period of time, put one foot on a stool or inside a low cabinet to take the pressure off your back, bend your hips and keep your back in a neutral position. Have someone else carry loads of laundry and groceries. Bend at the knees and hips, keeping your ears, shoulders and hips in line. Use a reacher to get clothes out of the washing machine or dryer.

You should stay away from any heavy housecleaning for 12 weeks (such as making beds, vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, and dusting). When cleaning the house, avoid bending at the waist, and squat down for things instead. Use long handled cleaning tools to reach above your head and in front of you. Try pushing instead of pulling whenever possible.

DRIVING AND GETTING IN AND OUT OF A CAR

Ask your doctor when you may begin driving again. If you choose to drive before the surgeon gives you the okay, you may not be covered by your insurance. Generally, people can start driving again after 6 weeks. Some of the criteria for driving would be being off narcotics, being able to turn your head and neck to monitor traffic and being able to make a panic stop.



Figure 6: Getting in and out of a car safely.

Getting into a Car: Have someone move the seat as far back as it will go. Recline the back of the seat if possible. Place a pillow on the seat to keep your hips above your knees, especially if the seat is low. Sit Down. Stand with your back to the car. Feel the car touch the back of your knee. Hold onto the side of the car and the dashboard, you can roll down the window and hang on to the car door as well. Lower yourself slowly onto the seat. Watch your head. Bring your legs into the car and slide back into the center of the seat. While leaning back lift your legs one at a time into the car. Sliding on the seat is easier if you sit on a plastic bag.

Getting Out of a Car: To get out, turn with your legs together until your legs are outside the car. Push yourself to the edge of the seat and stand up. Avoid taking long car rides. Take a short walk every 30 minutes to one hour.

SEXUAL ACTIVITY

Ask your doctor or occupational therapist about when you can begin having sex again. Stay away from positions that cause you to arch your back. Side-lying positions are usually more comfortable and place less stress on your back. If you lie on your back, support your neck and knees with pillows. Also, avoid shifting the position of your spine too rapidly. Your occupational therapist has a lot of brochures and written information regarding sexual activity, if you have concerns or questions.

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDED EQUIPMENT

- Raised toilet seat or commode chair
- Adequate chair and bed height to prevent you from bending at the waist or putting strain on your back.

- A tub bench or shower chair is helpful for showering. Be sure you always have a non-slip surface in your tub.
- Adaptive aids can be helpful for getting dressed and other daily tasks. Such as: a long handled reacher, long handled shoe horn, sock aid, elastic shoelaces or velcro closure on shoes.

Please contact the OT department if you have any questions or concerns about your activities of daily living.

Occupational Therapist: _____

Phone: _____

Produced by: Horizon Health Network - Zone 2 Occupational Therapists

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Mount Nittany Medical Centre <http://www.mountnittany.org/wellness-library/healthsheets>,
<http://www.allaboutbackandneckpain.com/recovery/tips-for-daily-living.as>