SAFETY AND AVOIDING FALLS

There are many things you can do to keep your joints safe. Please follow these suggestions to avoid injury and falls:

- Keep throw rugs put away
- Be aware of floor hazards such as small objects, pets, and uneven surfaces
- Provide good lighting; use lights and a flashlight as needed in the halls, bathroom, and bedroom
- Keep cords out of the walking path
- Wear slippers or shoes with backs; soles should be rubber for good traction
- Use chairs with arms to help you get up and down
- Get up slowly from a chair or bed in case you are dizzy
- Do not lift heavy objects for at least 3 months; discuss with your surgeon first

continued >>
3) Take a step into the walker with your affected leg.
4) Lean on the walker to give balance and support.
5) Take a step with your unaffected leg.
6) Move the walker forward one step.
7) Repeat the above until you've reached your target.

**Crutches**
Instructions should be followed as taught to you by your therapist. There are different ways to use crutches. You should use the method that is most appropriate for your needs.

**Cane**
1) Stand up straight holding the cane on the unaffected side.
2) Move the cane forward one step.
3) Move your affected leg forward.
4) Move your unaffected leg forward
5) Repeated the above until you've reached your target.

**TRANSFERS**

**Getting into bed:**
1) Back up to the bed until you feel it behind your legs. Place yourself halfway between the head and foot of the bed. Slide your affected leg out in front of you before sitting down.
2) Reach back with both hands and sit down on the bed. Scoot back toward the center of the mattress. Slick sheets, slick pajamas, or sitting on a plastic bag may make scooting easier.
3) Move the walker out of your way. Keep it close by.
4) Scoot your hips around to face the foot of the bed.
5) Lift the close leg into bed while scooting around.
6) Lift the other leg into bed. Do NOT cross your legs to help the affected leg into bed. Keep your legs at least 6 inches apart.
7) Scoot your hips toward the center of the bed.
8) Place a pillow between your knees.

**Getting out of bed:**
1) Move your hips to the edge of the bed while leaning on your elbows.
2) Sit up while lowering your affected leg to the floor.
3) Scoot to the edge of the bed while using your hands behind you.

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**ORTHOPAEDICS**

- Stop to think before taking on a new task
- Change positions frequently to avoid stiffness
- Get out of the car every 1-2 hours during travel for a short walk to lessen stiffness
- Keep your appointments with your surgeon as instructed

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4) Use both hands to push off from the bed.
5) Slide the affected leg out in front of you before standing up.
6) Get balanced before reaching for the walker.

Chairs and Toilets for Posterior Approach Patients

Sit in chairs with high, firm seats in order to keep your hips above your knees. Avoid low sofas or chairs. An extra cushion or pillow may be needed on the seat of a low chair if there is no other choice for sitting. Avoid crossing the affected leg over the other leg. Always keep your knees about 6 inches apart. It’s safer to keep both feet on the floor.

As raised toilet seat or a three-in-one bedside commode will be needed over your toilet for about 6 weeks after surgery. Ask your surgeon if precautions need to be followed beyond 6 weeks.

**Sitting on a chair or toilet:**

1) Take small steps and turn until your legs are against the toilet/chair.
2) Slide the affected leg out in front of you before sitting down.
3) When using a commode with armrests, reach back for both armrests and lower yourself onto the toilet. If using a raised toilet seat without armrests, keep one hand on the middle of the walker/crutch/cane while reaching back for the toilet seat with the other hand.

**Getting up from a chair or toilet:**

1) Slide the affected leg out in front of you before standing up.
2) When using a commode with armrests, push yourself up with the armrests. If using a raised toilet seat without armrests, keep one hand on the middle of the walker/crutch/cane and push off from the toilet seat with the other hand.
3) Gain your balance and place your hands on the walker/crutches.

**Tub/Shower**

You cannot get down into a tub until your surgeon tells you otherwise. You can safely sit on a bench/chair or stand in the shower. Posterior patients: be sure the tub bench/chair is high enough to keep your hips above your knees. Assure all needed items are within reach prior to your shower. Use a rubber mat or non-skid adhesive on the floor of the tub or shower. Do not shower until your staples/sutures are removed unless approved by your surgeon. The instructions below can also be followed for a shower stall.

**Getting into the tub using a tub bench:**

1) Place the tub bench in the tub. It should face the faucets.
2) Back up until you can feel the tub bench on the back of your legs. Be sure you are centered against the tub bench.
3) Slide your affected leg out in front of you before sitting down.
4) Keep one hand on the middle of the walker/crutch/cane while reaching back for the tub bench with the other hand.
5) Slowly lower yourself onto the tub bench without leaning forward.
6) Move the walker out of your way. Keep it close by.

**ORTHOPAEDICS**

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7) Lift your legs over the edge of the tub as you scoot yourself around. Do not bend more than 90°.
8) Scoot yourself to the center of the bench.

Getting out of the tub using a tub bench:
1) Scoot yourself around as you lift your legs over the edge of the tub. Do not bend more than 90°. Be sure your legs do not cross.
2) Scoot yourself to the edge of the tub bench.
3) Place one hand on the middle of the walker/crutche/cane. Push up with the other hand on the back of the tub bench. Do not bend forward.
4) Gain your balance and place your hands on the walker/crutches.

Vehicle

Getting into the vehicle:
1) Push the seat all the way back. Recline the back of the seat at least halfway.
2) Place a plastic trash bag on the seat to help you turn frontward more easily.
3) Back up to the vehicle until you feel it touch the back of your legs.
4) Slide your affected leg out in front of you.
5) Reach back for the back of the seat with one hand an the dashboard with the other hand. Lower yourself down without bending more than 90°. Be sure to lower you head to avoid hitting it on the door frame. Scoot backward toward the other seat.
6) Turn frontward, leaning back as you lift one leg at a time onto the floorboard of the vehicle.
7) Center yourself on the seat.
8) Bring the seat back to a comfortable position. Put on your seatbelt.

Getting out of the vehicle:
1) Push the seat all the way back. Recline the back of the seat at least halfway.
2) Scoot yourself sideways and backward as you lift one leg at a time out of the vehicle and onto the ground. Lean back as you do so.
3) Slide you affected leg out in front of you. Push yourself up with one hand on the dashboard and the other on the back of the seat. Do not bend more than 90°. Be sure to lower you head to avoid hitting it on the door frame.
4) Gain your balance and place your hands on the walker/crutches/cane.

Stairs

General rule of thumb: Go up with your unaffected leg and down with your affected leg.

Going Up Stairs
NOTE: Your therapist should give you detailed instructions on how to go up and down stairs with your walker, crutches, or cane. Below are general reminders related to the stairs.
1) Face the stairs. Hold the handrail with one hand.
2) Hold the walker, crutches, or cane wit with the other hand on the step above you.
3) Step up with the unaffected leg.
4) Step up with the affected leg.
5) Move the walker, crutches, or cane up one step.
6) Repeat the above until you’ve reached your target.

**Going Down Stairs**
1) Face the stairs. Hold the handrail with one hand.
2) Hold the walker, crutches, or cane with the other hand on the step below you.
3) Step down with your affected leg.
4) Step down with your unaffected leg.
5) Move the walker, crutches, or cane down one step.
6) Repeat the above until you’ve reached your target.

**Dressing**

**Putting on pants and underwear by yourself:**
1) Be sure all needed items are within easy reach.
2) Slide your affected leg out in front of you.
3) Sit down on a supportive surface to maintain your balance.
4) Use a reacher or dressing stick to grasp the clothing.
   Place your affected leg in first, followed by your unaffected leg. The reacher or dressing stick can be used to guide the waist band over your feet and knees.
5) Pull your pants up to your thighs without bending past 90°. (posterior patients)
6) Stand with the walker in front of you. Pull your pants up the rest of the way without bending forward.

**Taking off pants, underwear, or socks by yourself:**
1) Be sure all needed items are within easy reach.
2) Back up to the chair or bed.
3) Unfasten your pants and allow them to fall to the floor. Push your underwear off your hips.
4) Slide your affected leg out in front of you. Lower yourself down to a chair or bed.
5) Use a reacher of dressing stick to grasp the clothing.
6) Remove your unaffected leg first, followed by your affected leg.

**Putting on socks by yourself:**

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**ORTHOPAEDICS**

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**HOUSEHOLD TIPS**

- Maintain clear walkways.
- Do not get down on your knees to scrub floors. Use a mop or long-handled brush.
- Keep often used clothing or working supplies where they can be easily reached.
- Plan ahead by gathering all cooking or working supplies at one time to work on a project.
- Use a high stool or use cushions to provide a better working height.
- Plan rest periods in between periods of activity.
- Pace yourself; attempting to do too much at one time can leave you exhausted for the rest of the day.
- Note your highest energy time of day to tackle a heavier activity.
Putting on socks by yourself:
1) Be sure all needed items are within easy reach.
2) Slide your affected leg out in front of you.
3) Sit down on a supportive surface to maintain your balance.
4) Slide the sock fully onto the sock aide.
5) Bend your knee slightly.
6) While holding the cord with both hands, drop the sock aide in front of your foot.
7) Slide your foot into the sock aide.
8) Point your toes and straighten your knee. Pull the sock on and keep pulling until the sock aide pulls out of the sock. Do not lean forward past 90°. (posterior patients)

NOTE: Shoes should have rubber soles. Do NOT wear high heels or shoes without backs. Wear one of the following: Sturdy slip-on shoes, Velcro® closure shoes, or shoes with elastic shoe laces. Do not tie your own shoes since precautions could not be maintained.

Putting on shoes by yourself:
1) Be sure all needed items are within easy reach.
2) Slide your affected leg out in front of you.
3) Sit down on a supportive surface to maintain your balance.
4) Use a long-handled shoe horn, dressing stick, or reacher to slide your shoe in front of your foot.
5) Place the shoe horn inside the shoe.
6) Lean back as you lift your leg to place your toes inside the shoe.
7) Step down into your shoe, sliding your heel downward against the shoe horn.
8) Fasten your shoe by using the reacher to close the Velcro® straps or pull elastic shoe laces tight.

Taking shoes off by yourself:
1) Be sure all needed items are within easy reach.
2) Slide your affected leg out in front of you.
3) Sit down on a supportive surface to maintain your balance.
4) Use a reacher to unfasten your Velcro® straps or elastic shoe laces.
5) Use a long-handled shoe horn, dressing stick, or reacher to slide your shoe off your foot.

- Push or pull items instead of carrying them.
- Ask for help when you need it.
- Learn to work smarter, not harder.

NOTE: Many other tips for joint protection, work simplification, energy conservation, and equipment are available from an Occupational Therapist or the Arthritis Foundation. Check your local phone book for an Arthritis Foundation chapter near you.
ENERGY CONSERVATION/JOINT PROTECTION

Choose low-impact activities such as:

- Regular walks in or outdoors
- Walking on a treadmill
- Recommended exercise at a fitness center
- Swimming or aquatics after incision is healed and approved by your surgeon.
- Bicycling
- Dancing
- Golfing
- Cross-country skiing
- Tai Chi program (many are sponsored by a local Arthritis Foundation chapter)
- Joints in Motion class (sponsored by a local chapter of the Arthritis Foundation)
- Walk with Ease program (sponsored by a local chapter of the Arthritis Foundation)
- Upper extremity strengthening exercises

Avoid high-impact activities such as:

- Downhill or water skiing
- Jogging or running
- High-impact aerobics
- Jumping activities
- Tennis or racquetball
- Football
- Baseball
- Lifting > 25 lbs. over and over

Credit: National Association of Orthopaedic Nurses

FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT THE ORTHOPAEDIC COORDINATOR AT (475) 210-5409

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