

Activities of Daily Living After Spine Injury or Spine Surgery

This handout gives guidelines to follow after spine injury or spine surgery. Following these guidelines will protect your spine and help you recover.

Protect Your Spine

Remember to follow the **No BLT**:

- **Bending:** Do not bend your spine.
- **Lifting:** Do not lift more than 10 pounds. Your doctor will tell you how much you can lift. (A gallon of milk weighs 8 pounds).
- **Twisting:** Do not twist your back or neck. Move with your belly button and toes pointed in the same direction (like a robot).

Getting Dressed

- Wear loose-fitting tops. Do not twist your upper body when you put them on and take them off.
- When putting on a bra, clasp the bra in front first.
- Slip-on shoes are good for after surgery.
- For tie shoes, elastic shoelaces will make them easier to slip in and out of without bending forward to tie them. You can also loosen the laces towards your ankles to make your current shoe a slip-on. A long handled shoe horn will allow you to slip into tied shoes as well.
- Use a sock aid for putting on your socks.

Showers

- Have someone help you the first few times you shower, until you feel sure about your safety.
- To avoid slipping, wear sandals, shoes, or socks with non-slip tread when you shower or place non-skid strips in your shower or tub.
- Use a long-handled sponge or loofah to wash your ankles and feet.
- A shower chair or tub transfer bench may be recommended by your occupational therapist.

Preparing Your Home

- Remove loose, non-secured rugs in your home to avoid tripping and prevent falls.
- Contain pets in another room of the home when you return from surgery. Allow yourself to get into a safe, seated position before allowing the pets to come greet you.

- Make sure daily items are within reach at counter height.
- Keep your reacher nearby. If you are using a walker, you can:
 - tie your reacher to your walker with a piece of string.
 - Velcro™ your reacher to your walker.
 - carry your reacher in a walker bag.
 - rest your reacher between the walker handles.

Driving

- No driving while taking narcotics.
- Cervical spine surgery – no driving for two weeks.
- Lumbar or thoracic spine surgery – no driving until your follow-up appointment.

Using Adaptive Equipment for Dressing

Long handled bath sponge:

- Use while in seated position on tub or shower chair to wash your legs and feet. Keep your hip angle at 90 degrees.
- Squeeze sponge out and wrap a hand towel around it to dry lower leg.
- A long handled bath sponge works well to put lotion on your legs.



Reacher

Gather the leg of your pants to make the hole easy to get to. Hold onto the gathered leg with the reacher and bring it down to put your foot in the hole. Pull it up until you can easily reach it with your hand without bending. Repeat the process with the other leg.



Sock Aid

Pull the sock all the way onto the sock aid. Make sure the sock aid is all of the way into the sock.

Using the ropes put the sock aid down on the floor and put your foot in the hole.

Point your toes and keep them pointed while you pull slowly on the ropes. The sock will be pulled onto your foot as you pull the ropes. Make sure that you pull slowly so the whole sock is pulled all the way up. Use your reacher to adjust the sock over your ankle as needed.



Toilet tongs

Wrap the amount of paper around the tongs and grip the end to keep the paper on the tongs. You will need to partially stand up from the toilet to be able to reach. Make sure you do not twist your spine when using the tongs. You can use wet wipes with the tongs to be sure you are cleaning adequately.

Canning tongs work as well as the medical tongs.

Long handled shoe horn

- You can leave your shoes tied if using the shoe horn.
- Place your toes into your shoe. Place the shoe horn in the back of the shoe to keep the back of the shoe in place.
- Slide your heel down the shoe horn into the shoe.

