

# Getting Active

It's time to get moving! Several months after your hip fracture, you're likely experiencing a lot less pain and more function. Becoming more active should be part of your continued recovery.

Being "active" can mean many things:

- A sport or a fitness class;
- Another form of recreation, from gardening to dancing; or
- Incorporating activity into your daily life, like walking to errands instead of driving.

Anyone can gain from being active, but becoming active after a hip fracture isn't always easy. Maybe you're worried about the impact on your hip. Maybe you don't know what you can safely do, or which activities are best, or even know how to start.

Learn more about the benefits of activity, how to get moving, making the most of it, and getting around obstacles. See also the section in this booklet on *The Role of Exercise*.

## Benefits of Activity

Physical activity is anything that gets you moving. Being active is one of the most important things you can do to improve your physical and mental health, and your quality of life. Here are some benefits:

- Helps to maintain your weight – important for your general health and your joints.
- Improves your balance (important to prevent falls) and posture.
- Strengthens your heart, lungs, and circulatory system.
- Improves your endurance and energy levels.
- Strengthens your muscles and joints, and keeps your joints flexible.
- Limits the loss of muscle that happens with aging and inactivity.
- Improves your sleep and mood, helps you deal with anxiety, and keeps your thinking sharp.

- Reduces the symptoms of arthritis.
- Reduces your risk of developing certain disabilities and chronic conditions such as:
  - › Arthritis;
  - › Osteoporosis;
  - › Heart disease and stroke;
  - › Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease;
  - › Type 2 diabetes;
  - › High blood pressure;
  - › Depression; and
  - › Certain cancers.
- Keeps you socially engaged. This is vital to remember after you've broken a hip and are worried about getting around and being isolated.

### **Get Ready to Get Moving**

Becoming more active is safe for most people after a hip fracture. Here's how to start:

- Talk to your surgeon (the expert regarding your hip) and family doctor (who knows your general health and activity level). They'll advise what you can and can't do safely.
- Do you have a chronic health condition like arthritis, diabetes, or heart disease? Ask your family doctor, specialist or physiotherapist if your condition limits your ability to be active.
- Consider a fitness appraisal after you've talked to your family doctor. This is a great way to check your basic fitness level, so you can plan how to live actively.
- Think of gradually increasing both the amount of time you're active and your effort. If you've been away from any activity for even just a few weeks – let alone months, or maybe even years – it affects your fitness level.

- Find activities that work for you:
  - Yes: Low-load activities – e.g. walking, swimming, aqua-fit, cycling, and tai-chi – can be done safely and often.
  - No: High-impact activities that involve jumping, running or hopping on land usually aren't recommended, neither are activities that have a higher potential for contact.
- Check the website of the Canadian Orthopaedic Foundation, <http://www.whenithurtstomove.org>, for “Get Moving: Maximizing Your Activity After a Hip or Knee Replacement”. This guide covers modifying common activities, exercise classes, strengthening exercises, and stretching.

## **Make the Most of Moving**

### *Get FITT*

You'll improve your health and fitness by being active at least 30 minutes a day. Those improvements can go way up – in endurance, strength, balance and flexibility – if you increase that to 60 minutes a day. Think FITT, which stands for Frequency, Intensity, Time and Type.

- **Frequency:** How many times a week do you participate in activities? Ideally, you should be physically active each day.
- **Intensity:** How hard do you work? You can gain many health benefits from regular, moderate physical activity, so what you're doing doesn't have to be tough to help. Think of intensity this way: How fast are you breathing? How fast is your heart beating? How much are you sweating? In short, how much effort do you feel?
- **Time:** How much time do you spend on each activity? Add up your time during each type of physical activity, and gradually do more. Increase your time by up to 10% each week.
- **Type:** What activities interest you? When you choose activities that you look forward to, you're more likely to continue.

## *Monitor your progress*

To become more active safely, you have to tell your body what to do, and also listen to what your body is telling you.

- Pace yourself. Start slow and/or include enough breaks.
- Build up. Gradually, you can increase:
  - › How long you do an activity;
  - › How often you do it;
  - › The intensity (repetitions or load) of an activity; and
  - › The types of activities you do.
- Watch for pain. Muscle soreness is normal after starting, resuming, or increasing activity. Joint pain is *not* normal - it's a warning sign. Months after surgery, watch for sharp pain in your joint or lasting pain (into the next day) following an activity. Apply ice if you have swelling. It may be time to change the activity. Talk to your surgeon, physio-therapist, or a trainer who has worked with people who've had hip fractures.
- Keep an activity plan or log which helps you to:
  - › Keep on track;
  - › Celebrate successes;
  - › Note problems or obstacles; and
  - › Keep you motivated by focusing on targets and seeing how far you've come.

## Overcoming Barriers to Activity

There's one big reason to say "yes" to getting moving – your health and well-being. But you may also use all sorts of reasons to say "no" or "not now". It can be tough to get started or keep going. Here's how to work around 10 common barriers to avoiding activity:

1. *"I'm worried about wearing out my hip joint"*. Regular activity/exercise will help to strengthen the muscles around your repaired or new joint, provide stability, and help your mobility. If anything, inactivity can harm your hip and your general health. When people are sedentary, they tend to gain weight which puts a greater load on your joint, and may increase wear and tear.
2. *"I can't get motivated"*. Define physical activity broadly. Some people won't try a sport, but love dancing. Pick activities that you enjoy most, and have chances to do. Jot down your progress and set activity goals. You may be surprised at your ability to meet them.
3. *"I don't have time"*. If you don't have a solid block to devote to physical activity, spread it out. Instead of a 30-minute walk, three 10-minute walks a day might be easier. Build activity into other routines, such as stretching while you watch TV. Build more activity into daily tasks, like parking further away at the mall.
4. *"I don't like exercise"*. Physical activity is simply about getting moving. There are countless ways to do that. If you don't like traditional "exercise," garden, play with your grandchildren, or walk to the store.
5. *"I don't want to do it alone"*. Get a friend or family member to be an "exercise buddy" by taking a fitness class or walking together. Or join a community centre or a club that offers an activity you like. There are added benefits - getting moving becomes a social activity too, and doing it with others helps you to spur each other on.
6. *"I'm too tired"*. If being active is getting you tired, start slowly and increase gradually. The more active you become, the higher your energy level. If you feel you're too tired just think – soon, you'll be less tired because you moved.
7. *"I'm afraid of falling"*. Becoming active will help to avoid falls in the first place by improving your strength and balance. There are plenty of ways to get active and protect yourself from falls such as using a wall or counter for support during standing exercises. Walk with a cane or walker if needed. Do exercises in a chair. Swim. Regular activity is safe. The more you do it, the more confident you'll feel.

8. *“The weather is bad”*. If it’s too cold, hot, wet or icy out, exercise inside. Walk on a treadmill in the gym, swim at a community pool, or stretch at home.
9. *“I can’t afford it”*. Becoming more active doesn’t have to involve joining a gym, signing up for a class, or paying for a sport. It can be as simple – and as free – as walking in a mall.
10. *“I’m too old for this”*. As long as you can move, find something you enjoy. Stick to it, and you’ll reap the benefits of activity. It’s never too late to start again – or to start.

### **Keys Things to Remember**

- Being active helps you to:
  - › Feel better in body and mind;
  - › Stay independent and live longer; and
  - › Keep doing the things you enjoy.
- Activity doesn’t just mean exercise: it’s also about putting more movement into your daily life.
- By being active after a fracture, you’ll do wonders for your hip and your overall health and well-being.
- Talk to your surgeon or therapist. In general, you have relatively few restrictions.
- Start slowly but surely. Over time, you can change:
  - › How often you’re active;
  - › The duration of each activity;
  - › The intensity (light, moderate, vigorous); and
  - › The types of activities.
- Variety is important. It helps keep you interested, motivated and excited about what you’re doing.