

# Activities & Travel Following a Hip Fracture

## *Dealing with snow and ice*

- Clear your stairs and sidewalk of ice and snow. Sprinkle salt or sand if it's slippery.
- Be extra alert when walking on snow and ice. Don't rely completely on boots with ice grips or other anti-slip footwear to protect you from a fall.
- If you use a cane, put an ice pick on it.

## *Importance of nutrition in preventing falls*

- Get enough fluids to avoid dizziness.
- Eating poorly or skipping meals can cause low blood sugar levels and low energy. You can become weak and dizzy.
- If you have diabetes, be aware of the impact of high- or low-blood sugar. It can decrease your energy level, cause dizziness and confusion, and cause a drop in blood pressure that can result in a fall.

See also the section in this booklet on *Nutrition*.

## **If You Fall**

If you fall, do not attempt to get up if you're in severe pain or feel that you're injured. Wait and call for help. It's a good idea to:

- Have several phones in your house so you're not far from one at any time.
- Get a portable phone. Carry it with you everywhere, even into the bathroom.
- Consider getting a personal safety alarm to wear around your neck or wrist, or on a belt.
- If you live alone, have family or friends call every day to check in.
- Keep the bathroom door unlocked when you take a bath or shower.

*If you can get up, know how to do it safely. Follow these steps:*

1. If you feel dizzy or weak, wait until you feel more stable. Do not rush.
2. Curl your legs toward your body and place your hands to the side.
3. Push yourself up to a kneeling position (on your hands and knees).
4. Place one foot flat on the floor near the other knee, then place both hands on the upper knee.
5. Use the strength of your arms/hands and legs to lift yourself to a standing position. (You can also use furniture to help you get up.)
6. Roll onto your side and push up into a sitting position. Crawl to the nearest suitable piece of furniture.
7. Place your hand on the surface, and place one foot flat on the floor.
8. Lean forward and push up onto the forward leg and into a standing position.
9. Rest for a moment to feel more balanced and stable before moving.

### **Key Things to Remember**

- Know how to stay safe around the danger spots – bathroom, kitchen and stairs.
- Learn how to get up safely from a fall.
- Anyone who has had a fall, or even a near fall, can be anxious about falling again. This fear can make you cut back on your activity but it might not keep you safer. It will reduce your independence, confidence and enjoyment of life.
- Exercise and physical activity can improve your strength, balance and flexibility so you're less likely to lose your balance, and more likely to stop a fall if you do.
- Be aware of everything around your home that might trip you up and cause a fall, such as:
  - ▶ Scatter rugs;
  - ▶ Furniture that sticks out;
  - ▶ Clutter;
  - ▶ Electrical cords;
  - ▶ Slippery floors;
  - ▶ Raised doorway thresholds;
  - ▶ Loose handrails; and
  - ▶ Broken/uneven steps.
- A physiotherapist or occupational therapist can assess your home and recommend ways to reduce hazards that can lead to falls.

# Sexual Activity

## When to Resume Sex

After a hip replacement, people can usually resume sexual intercourse in about 4-6 weeks. This gives time for the incision and muscles around the hip to heal. Common fears and issues include:

- Pain or injury during intercourse (your partner may be afraid of hurting you too);
- Body image (your appearance might have changed after surgery);
- Sexual desire (due to medication side effects, fatigue, lack of activity, and depression).

This is all normal; talk to your partner.

## Planning for More Comfortable Sex

When you and your partner are ready to return to sex, give yourselves plenty of time. Plan for a time of day you feel best. Perhaps take a dose of mild pain medication. Do easy stretches or take a warm shower to relax your joints (and you). Tips for comfortable and safe positions and movement:

- Use pillows and rolled towels for support.
- Let your partner take the more active role and help you stay within a safe range of motion.
- Don't raise your knee toward your chest, bend forward past hip level, let your knee cross your belly button, or twist the hip.
- When on your side, separate both legs with pillows.
- Control the amount and speed of movement during intercourse.
- Take the same care getting out of a position as you did getting into it.

## Key Things to Remember

- Wait about 4-6 weeks before starting sexual intercourse again.
- Concerns about injury and desire are common. Take things slowly and be honest about your feelings. Tell your partner about any discomfort or new pain right away. If a position causes discomfort, don't do it. Try another and look forward to more progress next time.
- There are many ways to be intimate. Be ready to try something new to protect your hip.

# Travel

## Car Trips

- Move the front passenger seat as far back as possible. Roll the window down. If you have an artificial joint, place a wedge cushion on the seat (thick portion at the back).
- Back up to the seat. Place one hand on the window ledge and the other on the back of the car seat. Lower yourself slowly. Slide back until you can comfortably swing your legs into the car. Reverse the process to get out. Have any walking aid ready when you stand.



## Plane Trips

- The screws and other parts used to fix your hip may set off metal detecting devices in airports. Tell the security officer that you've had hip surgery. Security may then pass a hand-held wand over your hip area.
- Don't stay in one position too long. Get an aisle seat on the side of the fracture. That way, you can stretch your leg even if you can't get up.

## Key Things to Remember

- Avoid trips of more than an hour for six weeks. Your hip will feel uncomfortable and stiff.
- Most airlines advise that you shouldn't fly within three months of surgery due to the added risk of a deep vein thrombosis (DVT).
- Get out of your seat every 1-2 hours. Walk around to relieve back, hip and knee stiffness.