

# Joint Replacement Recovery: Activities of Daily Living

In the days and weeks following joint replacement surgery, physical activity is an important part of recovery. As you get stronger, activities of daily living, like showering and dressing yourself will get easier. But it is important to do these activities safely. Take it slowly. Many of these daily activities will be challenging at first but as your recovery progresses, they will become automatic again.

Remember, you are at an increased risk of falling after joint replacement surgery because your muscles are healing, and your balance may be off. To reduce your risk of falling, talk to your healthcare provider about how to safely get in and out of a chair, a bed, and a car. And, about how to bathe while sitting in a chair.

It is a good idea to have someone with you when you are first trying to do these things at home in case you need added support. Reaching too far, or becoming off balance while getting dressed, can cause pain at your incision site and in your joint. Talk to your healthcare provider or occupational therapist about ways to avoid pain while getting dressed.

You may want to wear button-up shirts and easy to pull-on pants while you recover. Use a long-handled shoehorn to help with your shoes and keep everything you need for dressing yourself within easy reach. As you feel more comfortable, begin to do light household chores like washing dishes. You can use a grabber to help you reach ceiling fans or light switches in your home. Avoid heavy chores like pushing a lawn mower until you are completely healed.

Your healthcare provider will also talk to you about certain positions that are better for your joint than others. For instance, depending on your joint replacement, you may be told to sleep with your leg straight, not to cross your legs while sitting, or not to bend or twist at your waist. Make sure to follow your healthcare provider's specific instructions on the movements you need to avoid with your new joint.

Your healthcare provider will let you know when you can start to drive again. Make sure you feel confident and are able to control your balance before you get behind the wheel of a car. It is a good idea to practice your driving skills in an area with little or no traffic at first.

Talk to your healthcare provider about when you can drive again. Never drive while on prescription pain medications. As you recover, routine activities that used to be easy may seem difficult and can be frustrating. Be patient. Your body is healing. Take each activity slowly until you regain your strength to stay safe.