Using Equipment to Help in Daily Activities after Your Total Knee Replacement

You may need to use adaptive equipment to help you with your daily activities because you are not able to move or bend over easily.

Reaching
If you are not able to get items from cabinets or off the floor, use self-help devices such as a reacher. Rearrange your cupboards so that items you use most often are within convenient reach. If you cannot get an item with your reacher, ask someone for help.

Dressing
Several types of devices are available to help you be as independent as possible when dressing. Your therapist may suggest other self-help devices.

- If you have trouble reaching your feet, wear slip-on shoes or use elastic shoelaces so you will not have to bend over to tie your shoes.

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- A long-handled shoe horn will help you put shoes on or take stockings and socks off.
- A dressing stick may be used to put on pants.
  - Use the hook to catch the waist of underwear or pants.
  - Place your operative leg first in the pants when dressing, and take it out last when undressing.
  - Pull the slacks up over your knees.
  - Stand with the walker in front of you and pull your slacks up.

- **Socks and Stockings**
  A stocking aid will make it easier to put on socks or stockings. Elastic stockings may be ordered for you.
  - Slide the sock or stocking onto the stocking aid. Be sure the heel is at the back of the plastic and the toe is tight against the end.
  - Secure the sock in place with the notches on the plastic piece. Do not pull the top of the sock over the top of the plastic piece.
  - Holding onto the cords, drop the stocking aid out in front of the operated foot.
  - Slip your foot into the sock and pull it on.
- Release the sock from the notches on the plastic piece using your dressing stick or a reacher.
- To take the stocking or sock off, use the hook on the dressing stick or reacher to hook the back of the heel and push the sock off your foot.

**Using the Bathroom**

You will need assistance to walk to the bathroom while in the hospital. The toilets at the hospital are of proper height. A raised toilet seat may be helpful at home.

**Bathing**

Unless you have a walk-in shower, you will have to learn a new method for getting in and out of the bathtub. You will be shown the proper method before being discharged from the hospital. When you get home, refer to the instructions below before bathing.

- Talk with your doctor or therapist about what bathing method is best for you.
- If possible, have someone help you the first time you bathe at home.
- You may sponge bathe until you are comfortable or have help to shower.
- If you have a walk-in shower, you may stand and shower as long as you feel steady and balanced.
- If you have a tub shower and need to sit to bathe, you will need a shower bench. Make sure the shower bench is placed firmly in the tub. Have someone adjust the height of the shower bench so it is as tall as it can be to allow you to rest your feet comfortably on the floor of the tub when you are sitting.
- Have someone put non-skid strips or pads in your bathtub for safety.
- Have a secure place to put your soap to avoid dropping it. Try soap on a rope or a deep soap dish. These items are sold at many department stores.
- Use a long-handled sponge or bath brush to reach your lower legs and feet without bending more than 90 degrees at your hips.
- A portable shower hose may be helpful.
- Turn on cold water first to avoid burning yourself.

**Using a Shower Bench**

1. Place the shower bench firmly in the tub. Stand with your back toward the bathtub. Be sure to have someone with you to hold the bench steady.

2. Slowly lower yourself onto the bath bench, sliding your operative foot forward as you sit.
3. You may be advised to support your operative leg with your good leg. If so, place your good leg under your operative leg. Remember to keep your knees apart and cross only your ankles.

4. Slide back and make sure you are in a safe sitting position. Swing your legs into the tub or have your helper lower your foot to the floor of the tub.

5. To get out of the tub, have someone lift your operative leg out and place your feet flat on the floor before you stand.

**Getting In and Out of Bed**

- Before your discharge from the hospital, the physical therapist will show you how to get in and out of bed safely.

- A hospital bed may be needed at home. Your physical therapist, nurse and case manager will talk with you about this if needed.

- Some people find it helpful to wear pajamas made of silky materials to help them slide more easily on the sheets.

**Getting Into a Car**

It is important to know how to get into the car in a safe manner. It is better for you to ride in a mid-size or large car with regular bench seats rather than bucket seats. Use a thick pillow or cushion. On a long trip, be sure to make frequent rest stops, about every 30 minutes. Get out and shift your weight from one leg to the other or walk around.
To get into the back seat, first lower onto the seat in a semi-reclining position. You will need to use your non-operative leg and scoot yourself farther back across the seat.

To get into the front seat, enter the car on the passenger side and make sure the seat is as far back as possible. Recline the seat back as much as you can so you will be able to scoot up the back of the seat.

1. Stand with your back toward the car. Put your operative leg out ahead of you and slowly sit.

2. Scoot back on the seat then swing your legs into the car, first one leg then the other. Use the backs of the seats like arm rests to support yourself as you sit. If you have extra long legs, be sure to scoot back as far as you can.

Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.