



Home Safety Checklist

You are about to undergo surgery for a hip or knee replacement. Now is the time to get your home ready for your return. The checklist below covers the most common areas of concern for you. Be sure to review this list and make any modifications to your home before leaving for your procedure.

When moving through this checklist, please ask another able-bodied person to assist you in physically rearranging your home. You could consider asking a family member, a friend, a neighbor, or a member of your church or community group.

It may take you one to two hours to work through this checklist and to prepare your home. If you cannot go through this checklist before surgery, you may need a caregiver to do a safety evaluation (including this checklist and any other recommendations from hospital staff) on your home after surgery.

Pathways

You will need a clear pathway between the bedroom, kitchen, bathroom, and living room.

- Remove clutter and tripping hazards like cords, furniture with sharp edges or wide-based supports, where you will be walking.
- Tape down loose carpet edges that stick up.
- Remove throw rugs until you recover and are more stable.
- If you have pets that like to walk next to you, they will need to stay out of your way until you recover and are more stable on your feet.
- Arrange for someone to feed and water your pets and plants until you are able to bend over safely. This may be approximately 6-8 weeks.
- Place your chair, remote controls, radio, telephone, medicine, tissues, wastebasket, and drink in the place where you will spend the most time while you recover.

Lighting

You will need a well lit environment to see where you are going.

- Put a lamp and a flashlight beside your bed or where you will be sleeping.
- Turn on lights before you enter a dark room or keep night lights on in rooms. It is unadvised to walk in dark rooms as you might fall.
- Take your time when moving in your house—DO NOT RUSH.
- Remember to turn on a light if you need to get out of bed in the night. Allow yourself time to get oriented to your surroundings before moving.

Stairs/Steps

This refers to either stairs or steps inside or outside the house.

- Install solid handrails ideally on both sides of the stairs or steps that can support your weight.

Bathroom

This room can be an unsafe area in your home as water may be on the floor or on surfaces. The bathroom is typically a smaller room to maneuver in with your assistive device (walker, crutches, cane, and wheelchair).

- Assess the ability to maneuver in your bathroom with a walker or wheelchair. You may need to borrow one to test the area. A standard rolling walker is usually 24-27 inches wide x 12-17 inches deep. Are you able to move between the bathtub/shower and the toilet? What about moving between the toilet and the sink without bumping into walls or surfaces? Do you feel that you are well-balanced in this surrounding? Can you move through the door into/out of the bathroom with the assistive device? If you cannot do this you will most likely have difficulty using this room upon returning to your house until you are more stable on your feet. You may need a portable toilet that can be used in another room of the house.
- Determine what sort of showering situation you will have after surgery. Will you be using your “usual” bathroom or would another be more convenient or accessible? Do you have a walk in shower or a tub/shower combination? With a walk in shower, does it have a secure place to sit or is there enough room to place a waterproof stool? With a tub shower combination, do you have sliding doors (if so, try to have them removed)? It is a good idea to have a hand held shower adapter installed and if there is enough room, place a waterproof bench or stool. Shower/tub benches and stools/chairs are typically available at medical equipment stores.
- Measure the height of your toilet from the floor to the toilet ring (the part you sit on). It needs to be 20 inches or higher to allow you to safely move on/off the toilet. If you have had hip surgery, you will need a toilet that is 22 inches high. If your toilet is too short, you may need an extender which is available at local medical equipment stores.
- If your tub or shower does not have slip resistant product on the bottom, try using a non-slip rubber mat.
- Install grab bars by the toilet, in the shower or tub area that can support your weight.

Kitchen

- Move frequently used items from high and low storage areas to areas that are at waist to chest level.
- Set up a clean, clutter free table as your kitchen work space that is close to the sink/stove/refrigerator.
- Stock up on basic foods. Prepare freezable meals ahead of time that can be reheated and served easily.

Bedroom

- Move clothing and toiletries to chest/waist level so as to avoid reaching and bending.
- If possible, try to make the bedroom you will be using after surgery on the same level as your bathroom and kitchen.
- Have a lamp and a flashlight beside your bedroom. Use them when the room is dark.
- You may need the portable toilet or urinal beside your bed at night.
- Someone other than yourself needs to empty the portable toilet or urinal as you will be using an assistive device after surgery.

Furniture

- Put a chair with armrests in each room that you intend to use after surgery.
- All sitting surfaces that you will be using should be no lower than 24 inches. Couches and sitting chairs may need to be built up with blocks or furniture extenders.
- If you are having hip surgery, you will not be able to safely use a recliner for approximately 2-3 months. It is safe to use a recliner if it's sitting surface is elevated to 26 inches above the floor. If not, make sure that you have another comfortable chair to sit in and use.
- No furniture should be on wheels. Store it away for now until you are more stable on your feet.

Now that you've worked through this checklist, you should be proud of the efforts that you've made to make your home more accessible to you after surgery. Your therapists and nurses may have more specific instructions for home modifications as they work with you in the hospital for special situations to help make the transition back home easier.

If you have further questions, please call our Orthopedic Clinical Nurse Coordinator at 888-805-2649 or 936-631-6766.