



PRECAUTIONS FOLLOWING BACK SURGERY

- X After you have had a spinal fusion or stabilization, you must not bend your back for at least 3 months.
- X Each day, you are only allowed to sit for 30 minutes at a time, up to 6 times per day. You may lie down or walk as much as you wish.
- X Remember, you must wear your brace at all times when you are not lying down (except when bathing).

HOW DO YOU DO YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES WITHOUT BREAKING THE PRECAUTIONS?

Dressing

Plan ahead. Have your clothes laid out close where you will be dressing. You may find it easier to lie on your back to get your clothes on and off. Bend one leg at a time toward your chest. Loose fitting clothes and slip-on shoes are easier to get on and off. You should wear shoes with padded soles to cut back on shock from hard floors.

If you are seated, do not bend forward to put on pants, underwear, shoes or socks. A **reacher, sock-aid, and long-handled shoe horn** allow you to put on these items without bending. Your occupational therapist will tell you about the use of these items and where to get them

Bathing

- X Sponge bathing is best until your incision or cut is healed or until your doctor says you can get your incision wet. Take care not to bend or twist when washing or drying yourself. A **long-handled sponge** will allow you to scrub your feet without bending.

- X If you are getting into a tub or shower, you may want to use a **bath chair** or **bath bench** for safety, and have a non-slip surface on the tub floor. Use a **hand held shower**, and remember not to bend for the taps, soap, or your feet.

- X You may also stand to shower. Again remember not to bend to reach your soap or shampoo. (A shower caddy hanging from your shower head will be very useful.)

Using the Toilet

You must use a raised toilet seat or commode chair since regular toilet seats are too low. You may borrow one from the Red Cross or rent from a medical supply company. Do not bend or twist when reaching for or using the toilet paper.

Home Management

Plan ahead! Arrange your kitchen so that the dishes , knives, forks etc that you use regularly are on the counter. Avoid stooping. Keep everything within easy reach and use a step stool or reacher to get items from overhead. If standing in one place for a long period to time, put one foot on a stool or inside a low cabinet to take the pressure off your back.

Carry lighter loads of laundry and groceries. Bend at the knees and hips, keeping your ears, shoulders and hips in line. Keep the object close to your body and hold with two hands. Use a reacher to get clothes out of the washing machine or dryer.

House Cleaning

When house cleaning, avoid bending at the back. Use your knees to bend down for things. Use long handled cleaning tools to reach above your head and in front of you. Light weight supplies such as mops, vacuums and brooms are easier on the back. Try to push instead of pull whenever possible.

Child Care

Now is the time to ask for help. If you must lift an infant, bend at the knees with one foot in front of the other to lift the baby out of a crib. Ask older children to get up on a chair to be picked up. Always work at waist height to bathe, change, and dress a child.

When You are Sitting

Choose a firm, straight-backed chair to sit on. Chairs with armrests are good as they give you something to push up from when you get up. Make sure your feet are flat on the floor and your hips are level with your knees. If your chairs are too low, you can raise the seat by using **cushions or furniture blocks** to increase the seat height. Use a telephone book for under your feet if they do not touch the floor. Use a reacher to pick things off the floor or from above your head. **DO NOT BEND OR TWIST TO REACH THINGS !**

Driving

Ask your doctor when you can begin driving again. Make sure that your knees are level with your hips when seated in the car. You may have to place a pillow on the seat to make sure of this. Back into the car and holding the door and car frame, bend at your knees to lower onto the car seat. Swing your legs in as you turn your whole body. Placing a plastic bag on the seat will make it easier to slide. Do these steps backwards to get out of the car. **Avoid taking long car rides.** Take a short walk every 30 minutes.

Sexual Activity

Ask your doctor or occupational therapist about when you can begin having sex again. Try to stay away from positions that cause you to arch your back. Side-lying positions are usually more comfortable and place less stress on your back. Your occupational therapist has a lot of brochures and written information regarding sexual activity, if you have concerns or questions.

**PLEASE CONTACT OUR DEPARTMENT IF YOU HAVE ANY
QUESTIONS OR CONCERNS ABOUT YOUR DAILY ACTIVITIES**

Occupational Therapy _____

*Produced by:
AHSC Occupational Therapists
Revised March 7/03*

