

As we age, more of us are having hip replacement surgery—sometimes more than once. But what happens after your surgery when you go home? Understanding your rehabilitation needs will help you to plan ahead.

You have a new hip: *Now what?*

By Audrey Miller, MSW, RSW, CCRC

Achieving a successful total hip replacement depends upon your diligence in physical rehabilitation. Your rehab team will work together to provide the care and encouragement you need during the first few days after surgery.

The hospital discharge planner or social worker will help you make the necessary referral to the local community care centre for support. If you think you require additional private services, discuss your needs with the hospital social worker or your eldercare consultant. Specific assistance in the following areas is typically required:

- personal assistance for bathing, grooming, cooking, laundry, light housekeeping, shopping and support in walking or completing gentle exercises
 - nursing for dressing care or other health monitoring
 - physiotherapy to increase your range of movement, strength, stamina and endurance and to help progress your mobility
 - occupational therapy to assist you in increasing your usual activities of daily living
- Your physiotherapist will teach you simple exercises to strengthen your muscles in the hip and your lower extremities. She or he will teach you to walk safely with an appropriate assistive device (usually a walker or crutches) and how to manage stairs.

The occupational therapist will teach you how to safely perform activities of daily living and will also instruct you in the proper use of various

devices to improve and facilitate your activities of daily living. These devices may include

- a reacher to dress and pick things up from the floor
- a sock-aid to assist in putting on socks
- a long-handled sponge to wash your legs and feet
- an elevated toilet seat
- an elevated bathtub chair

Having encouragement from a friend or relative is also very important to avoid feeling sad or discouraged. A friendly voice on the other end of the phone and visits from friends and family are helpful during your recuperation time.

Speak to your pharmacist and doctor about any pain or medication usage issues. Medications need to be monitored closely.

It is important to ask questions of your health team. If you feel intimidated or rushed when speaking to your doctor, bring someone with you, who you trust and who can clarify your questions or ask them on your behalf.

Although recovery and function vary from person to person, total hip replacement surgery is one of the most successful procedures in medicine, and it assists many in resuming everyday function. Plan ahead, ask questions and get involved—all will help you make a successful recovery. ●

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Safety first

- Grab bars and handrails in the bathroom are important for safety reasons, as there are often restrictions in terms of how high you can reach, carry, bend or pull.
- Consider having meals prepared and frozen in advance, or ask for assistance from family and friends.
- Remove scatter rugs and other items that are tripping hazards.
- Use a portable phone to avoid hurrying to another room to answer a call.
- Wear an apron for carrying things around the house (like the portable phone). This will leave your hands and arms free to use crutches.