

# Active Amputees

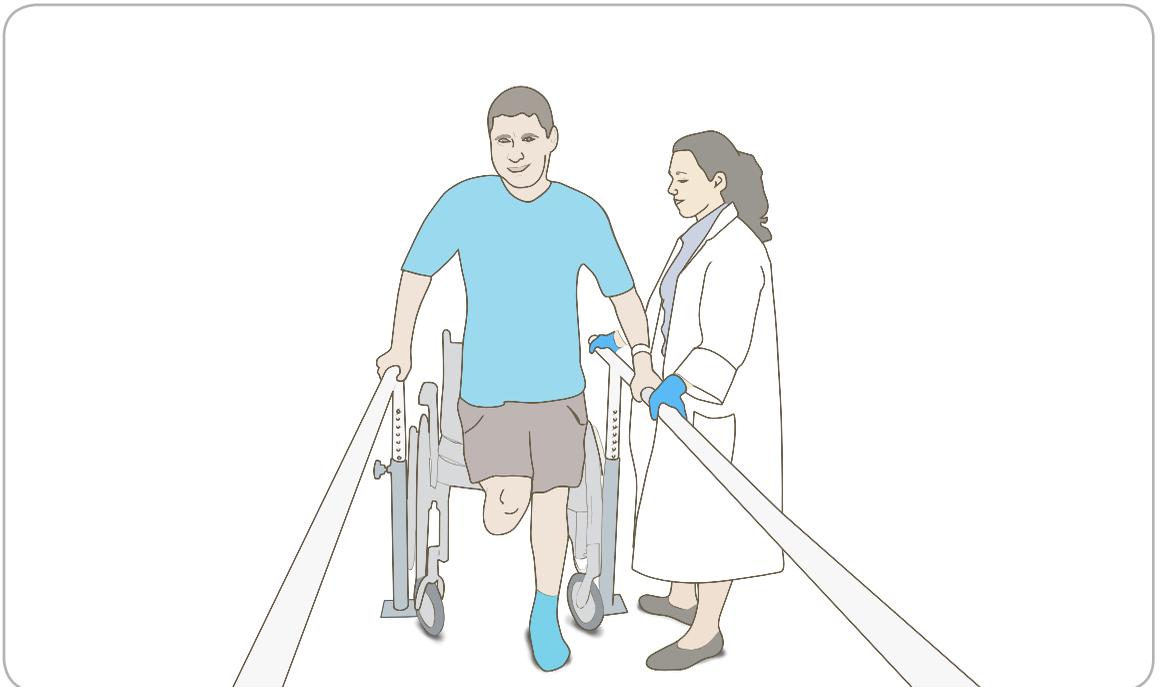
## The Road to Independence

A patient-friendly booklet for:

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This booklet is to help you understand and prepare for your recovery.

Please review it with the physical and occupational therapist.



This document was developed by Andreea Florean pht. and Erin Walker erg.  
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## **IMPORTANT : PLEASE READ**

Information provided in this pamphlet is for educational purposes. It  
is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a physical and  
occupational therapist. Speak to your physical or occupational therapist  
if you have any questions concerning this booklet.

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# Introduction

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## What is Rehabilitation?

Having an amputation can be a stressful event in your life. Many patients can feel anxious and overwhelmed.

**Rehabilitation** is the process of learning new techniques to become independent and embrace a new lifestyle after having had an amputation. This booklet was created to give you the information you need to begin this process.

## What is an Active Amputee?

Rehabilitation is hard work, but you are not alone. The hospital staff is here to help you. Rehabilitation is a team effort. This team includes you, the physical therapist, occupational therapist, doctors, nurses, orderlies and occasionally, the social worker.

For rehabilitation to be successful, it is important for you, the most important member of the team, to be proactive and engaged. This is what it means to be an **active amputee**.

## Why do I need a Wheelchair?

You will need a wheelchair during most of your rehabilitation in order to move around. The hospital will lend you a wheelchair to use during your stay.

After this period, you may be transferred to a **rehabilitation center** where you will stay and complete a rehabilitation program. If you will have a prosthetic leg, this will be made for you at the rehabilitation center. Wheelchair and prosthetic leg costs are covered by the Quebec Health Insurance plan.

# Introduction

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## How to use this Booklet?

This booklet should be used daily to help you remember what you have learned and guide you through your exercise program. During your rehabilitation, you will learn how to:

- Correctly position your body in bed and in your wheelchair
- Do exercises to develop good joint movement and build strength
- Move into and out of your wheelchair
- Perform personal care (e.g. washing and dressing)

Your physical or occupational therapist will review all the material covered in this booklet. Please feel free to discuss your questions or concerns with them at any time.



**Please do not attempt to perform any of these exercises and activities by yourself for the first time.**

# Positioning

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## Why positioning is important

It is important to maintain normal joint movement in your legs. This is to be able to completely straighten as well as bend your knee and hip.

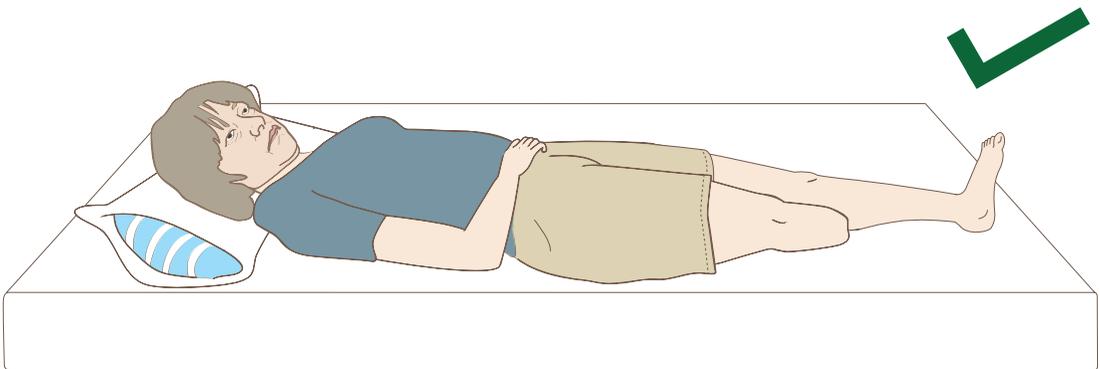
If you have an above-the-knee amputation, you need to have good joint movement in your hip joints.

With proper positioning and good joint movement, you are less likely to develop other health problems. You will also become independent sooner, and have a smoother recovery.

## Lying in bed

When lying in bed, it is important you change position every two hours to avoid **bedsores** (or damaged skin). You can alternate between lying on your back, lying on your non-amputated side, sitting up at the edge of your bed, and sitting in your wheelchair.

Ask the hospital staff members for more information about bedsores.



# Positioning

## Sitting in your wheelchair

Follow these steps for proper positioning in your wheelchair:

1. Transfer into your wheelchair (refer to pages 16-20 to learn how).
2. Place the **extension board** under your chair cushion. (An extension board is a wooden board used to keep your knee straight while sitting.)
3. Push it all the way to the back of your chair so it sits completely under your amputated leg.

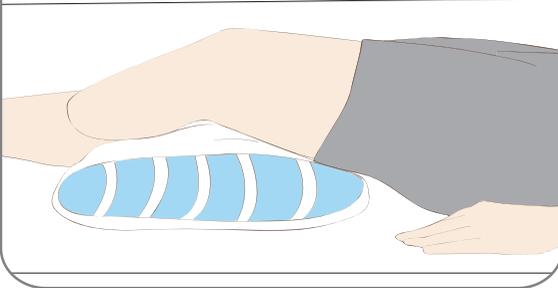


Proper wheelchair positioning for the below the knee amputee  
using an extension board

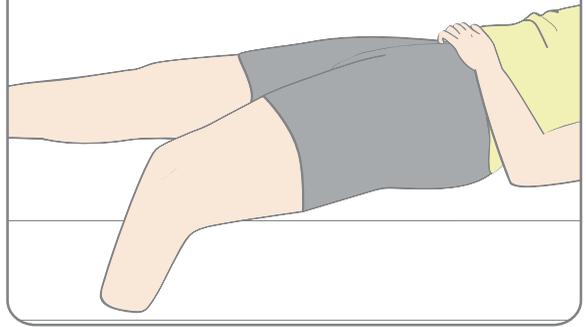
# Positions to Avoid

Staying in certain positions for a long period of time will lead to joint stiffness. Avoid the following positions so this will not happen to you:

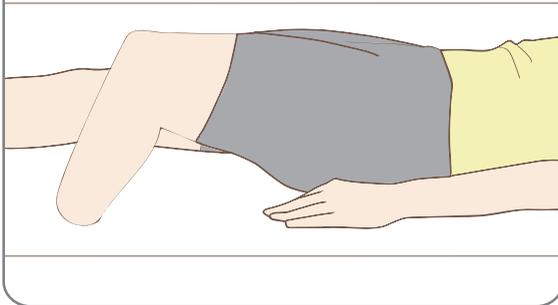
**✗** Do not place a pillow under your knee, unless this is advised to you by a health care professional.



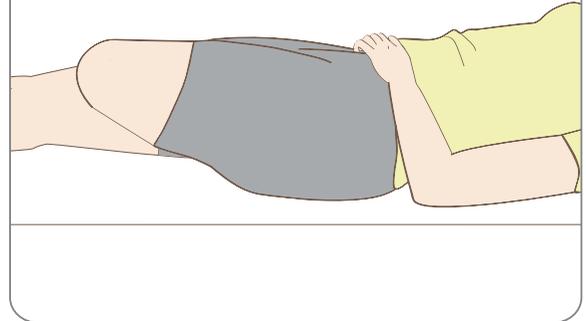
**✗** Do not hang your amputated leg on the edge of the bed.



**✗** Do not keep your knee bent.



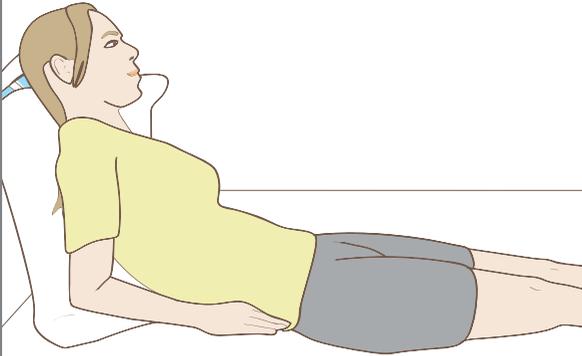
**✗** Do not keep your amputated leg elevated or lifted.



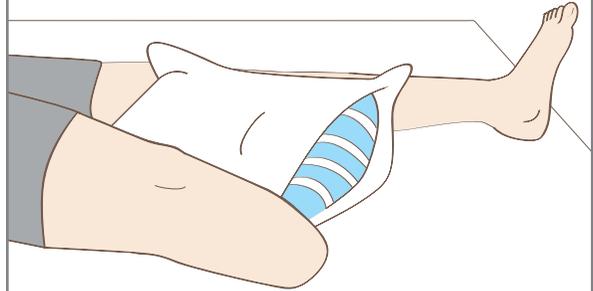
# Positions to Avoid

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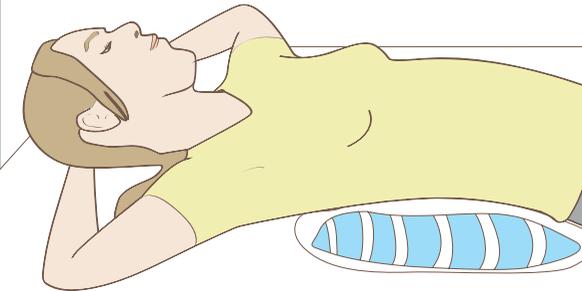
**✗ Do not** spend all your time sitting up in bed.



**✗ Do not** place pillows between your legs.



**✗ Do not** place a pillow under your back.



**✗ Do not** sit in your wheelchair with your amputated leg hanging down. (Use your extension board instead.)



# Exercise program

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## Why exercise is important

Exercise will help you increase your strength, endurance and optimize your independence.

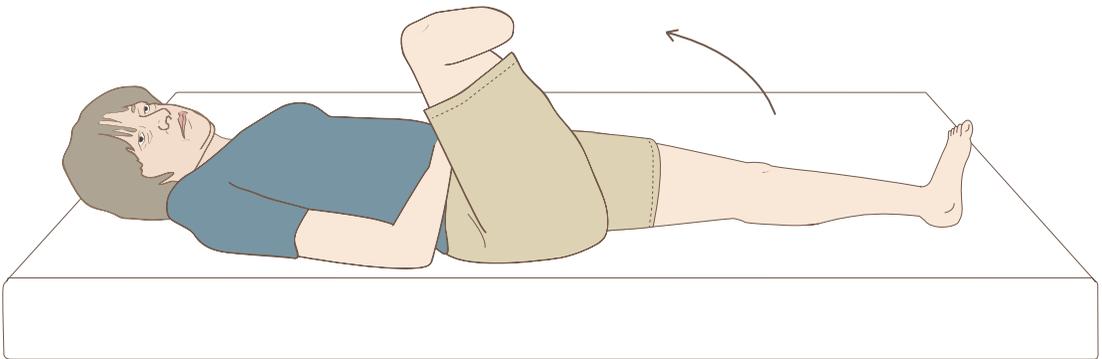
There are 2 main ways that you can exercise. You can exercise **while lying down** and **while sitting down**. The next few pages will cover exercises in these 2 different positions. These exercises are for you to do while at the hospital. You may be given a new exercise program at the rehabilitation center if you are transferred there after your hospital stay.

**Do only the exercises chosen and discussed with your therapist. He or she will check off the exercises that are best for you.**



## Exercises performed lying down

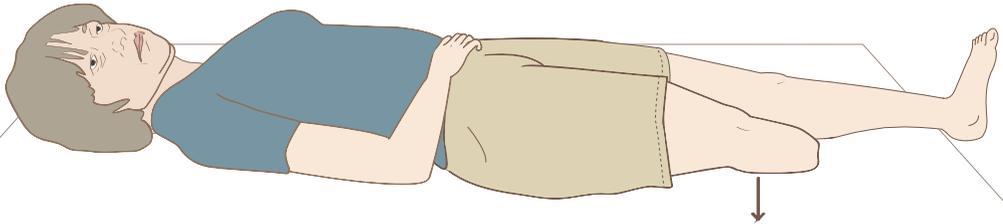
### Knee and hip bends



Bend your knee and hip as much as you can, then slowly straighten your leg back down to the bed. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times. Repeat with your other leg.

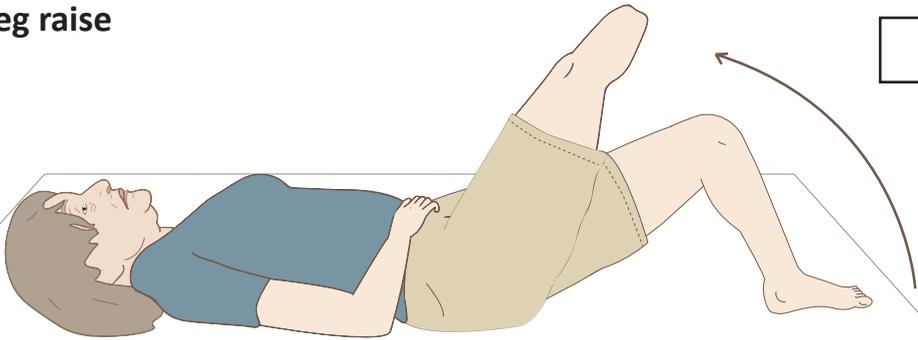
# Exercise program

## Thigh strengthening



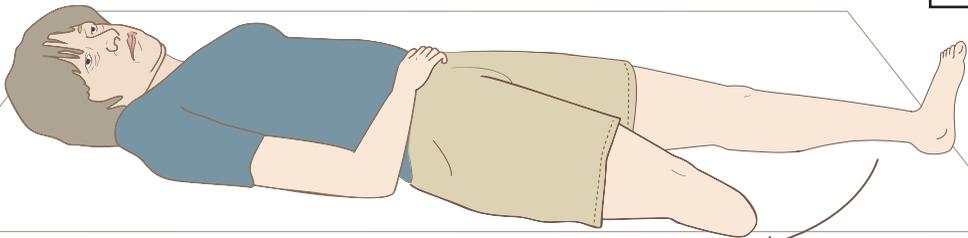
Squeeze your thigh muscles and press the back of your knees into the bed. Hold 5 seconds and relax. Do both legs at the same time. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.

## Straight leg raise



Bend your good leg. Lift your amputated leg up straight. Keep the knee straight. Then lower it back down slowly. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.  
Do not repeat with the other leg.

## Hip sliding

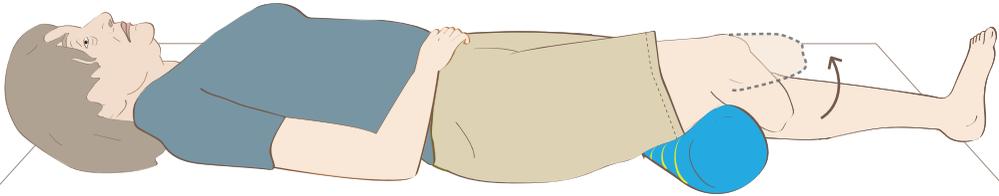


Keeping your legs straight, slide one leg out to the side. Bring it back. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times. Repeat with your other leg.

# Exercise program

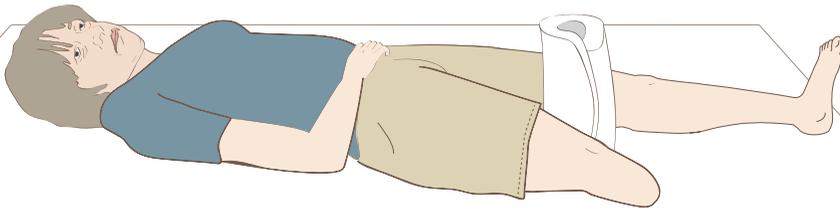
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## Knee strengthening



Place a rolled pillow under your knee. Straighten your knee as much as possible. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. Repeat \_\_\_ times. Repeat with your other leg.

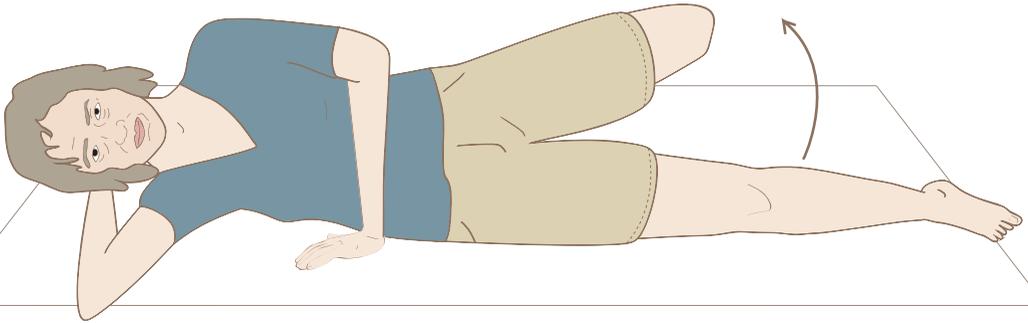
## Hip strengthening



Place a folded pillow between your thighs. Squeeze the pillow with your thighs. Hold 5 seconds and relax. Repeat \_\_\_ times.

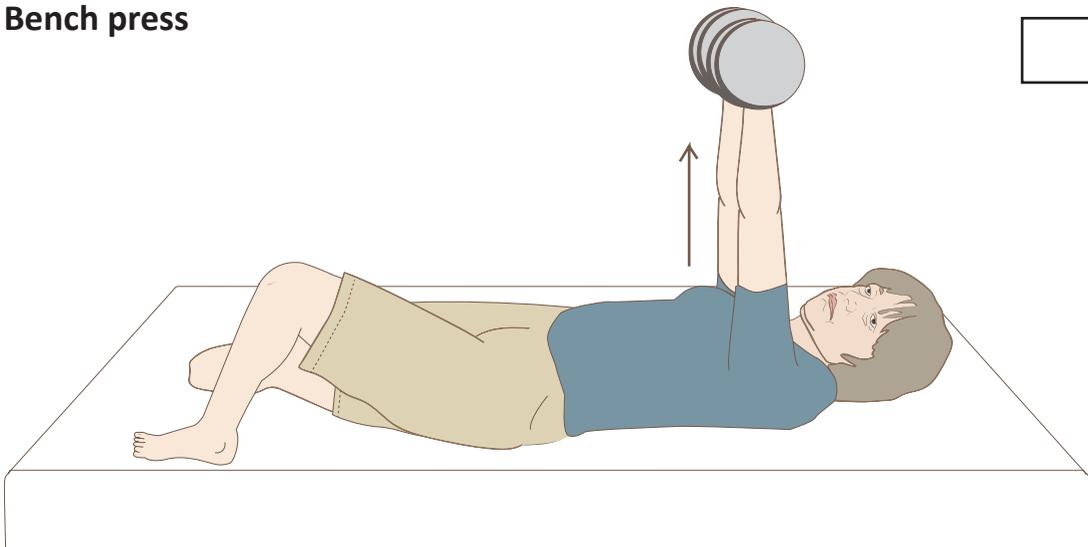
# Exercise program

## Leg lift lying on your side



Lying on your non-amputated side, lift your amputated leg as high as you can. Lower it down slowly. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times. **Do not repeat with the other leg.**

## Bench press



Lift up your arms above your chest and completely straighten your elbows. Lower them down slowly. Progress with weights as directed by your therapist. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times

# Exercise program

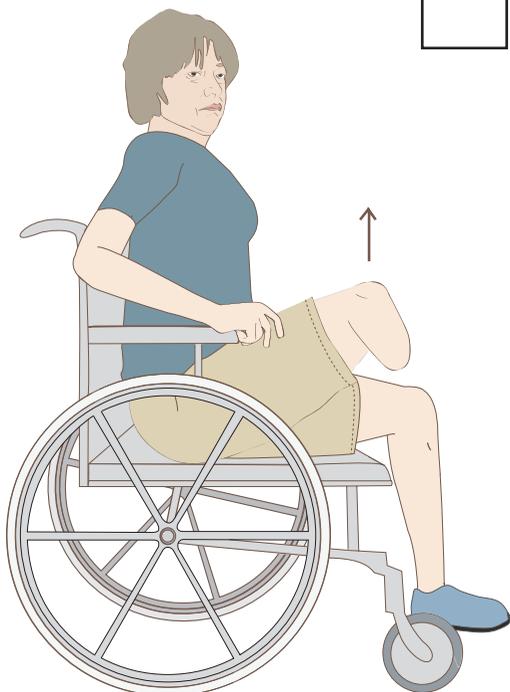
## Exercises performed while sitting down

Do only the exercises chosen and discussed with your therapist. He or she will check off the exercises that are best for you.



Do these exercises \_\_\_\_\_ times a day.

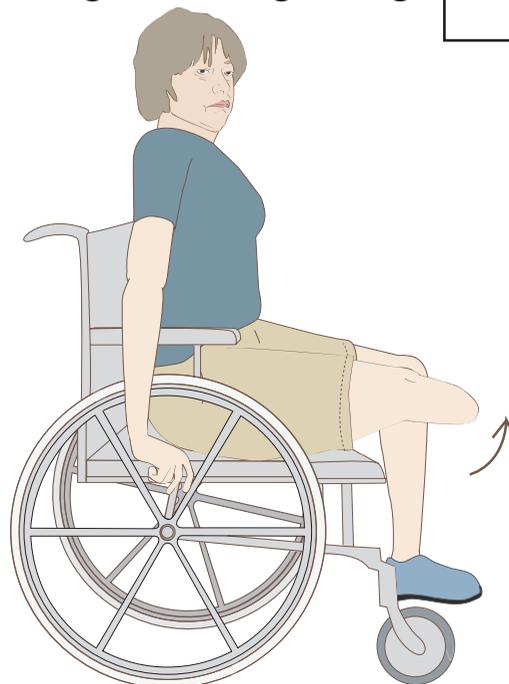
### Knee and hip bends



Lift your thigh off the chair as high as possible. Slowly lower it down.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.  
Repeat with your other leg.

### Sitting knee strengthening

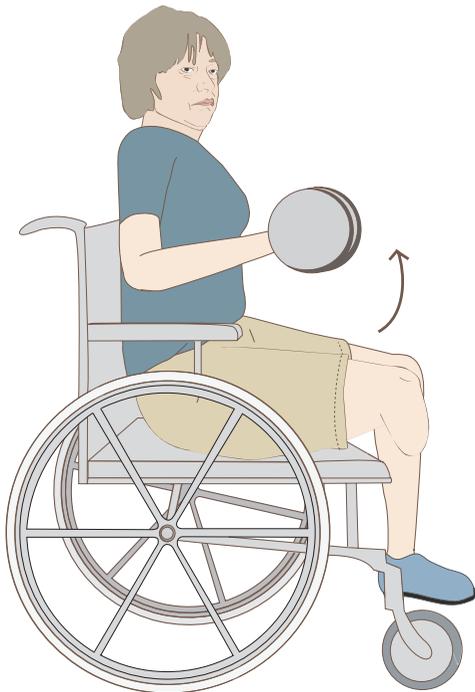


Straighten your knee as much as possible. Hold for 5 seconds. Slowly lower it down.

Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times. Your physical therapist will show you how to do this exercise with weights. Repeat with your other leg.

# Exercise program

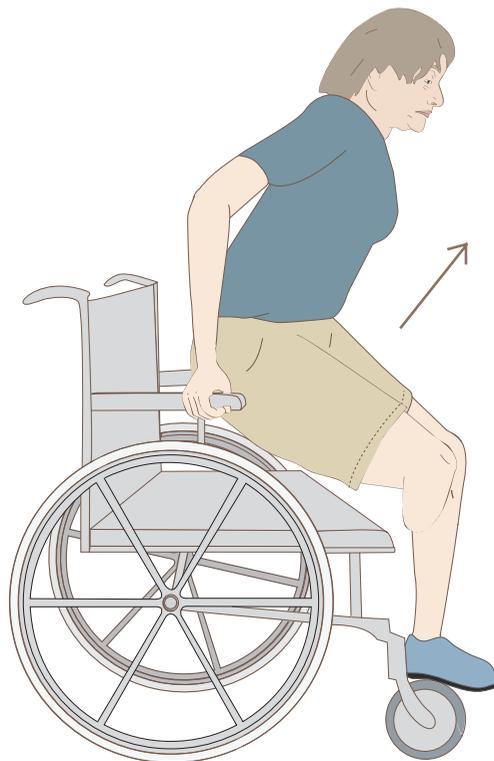
## Elbow bends



Bend and straighten your elbow. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.  
Repeat with the other arm.

Your physical therapist will show you how to do this exercise with weights.

## Arm strengthening



While sitting, push your hands down on the armrests to lift yourself off the wheelchair.

Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



**Make sure the brakes are on if you are sitting in a wheelchair.**

# Transfers: moving safely into and out of your wheelchair

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## Why transfers are important

To “transfer” means to move from one surface to another. Learning new ways to move around is part of the process of becoming independent. Safety during transfers is important to avoid falls.

### Safety during transfers means:

- Using correct transferring techniques
- Asking for help when you need it
- Not transferring when alone (unless instructed to do so by your therapist)

There are 2 key techniques that you can use to transfer safely from your wheelchair: **the transfer board technique** and the **pivot transfer technique**. These 2 techniques are described for you here. Your physical or occupational therapists will help you decide which technique is best for you.



**Always wear shoes or anti-skid socks  
during transfers.**

# Transfers: moving safely into and out of your wheelchair

## Transfer board technique

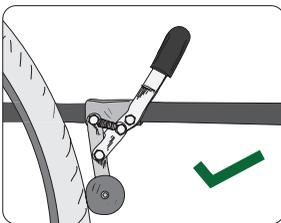
The transfer board technique can be done in 11 simple steps. you will learn each step gradually with your physical or occupational therapists.

### Move into position

1. Keep your non-amputated leg next to the bed.

2. Move your wheelchair as close to the bed as possible.

3. Put on the wheelchair breaks.



4. Raise the armrest.

5. Place the transfer board under your buttock as shown.

6. Place one hand on the armrest and the other on the transfer board.

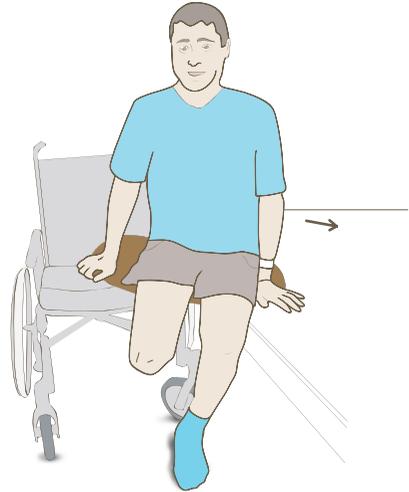


7. Make sure that your whole foot is touching the ground.

# Transfers: moving safely in and out of your wheelchair

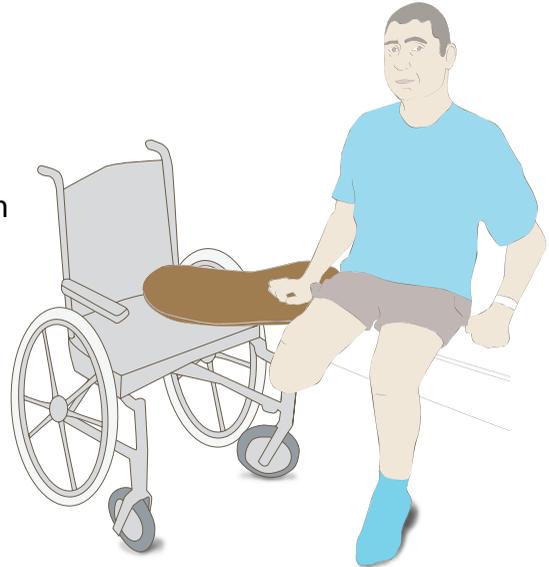
## Move slowly across the transfer board

8. Lift up your buttocks using your arms and non-amputated leg.
9. Move gradually along the transfer board (just a few inches at a time), until you are seated on the bed.



## Remove the transfer board

10. Lift up your buttocks.
11. Remove the transfer board with your hand..



**There are different types of transfer boards. Your therapist will help you choose one that works best for you.**

# Transfers: moving safely in and out of your wheelchair

## Pivot transfer technique

The pivot transfer technique can be done in 9 simple steps. You will learn each step gradually with your physical or occupational therapist.

### Moving into position

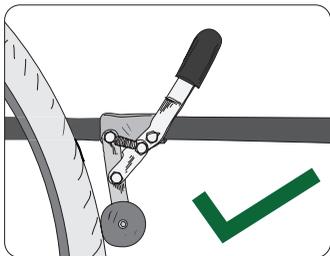
1. Move your wheelchair as close to the bed as possible.

2. Keep your non-amputated leg next to the bed.

3. Put on the wheelchair breaks.

4. Raise the armrest.

5. Make sure that your whole foot is touching the ground.



# Transfers: moving safely in and out of your wheelchair

## Move from your wheelchair to the bed

6. Place one hand on armrest and the other hand on the bed.
7. Lift yourself to a standing or semi-standing position.
8. Pivot on the ball of your foot.



9. Sit on the bed.



**Your physical or occupational therapist will help you decide which transfer technique is best for you.**

# Personal care

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**Personal care** means taking care of yourself by grooming, dressing and maintaining proper hygiene.

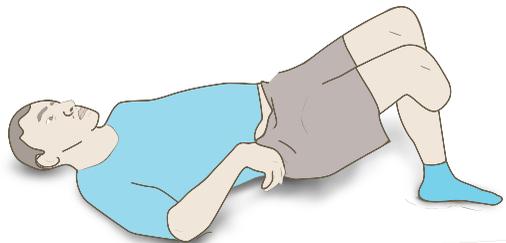
While you are in hospital, your nurse or orderly will help you with your personal care. Active participation in your personal care is also part of the rehabilitation program.

The following section of this booklet will discuss some techniques to make dressing and personal hygiene easier for you.

## Dressing

### Putting on shorts or underwear

1. While sitting in bed, place your shorts over your legs.
2. Dress your non-amputated leg first. Pull them up to just past your knees.
3. Lie down on your back, lift your buttocks in the air and pull up your shorts.



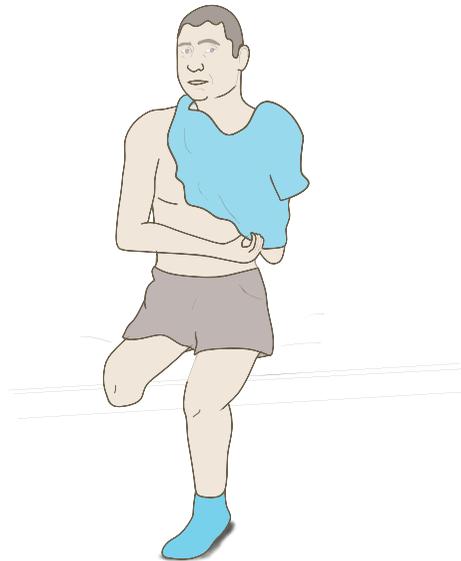
**Adjusting the hospital bed controls can make dressing easier. Your occupational therapist will show you how to use them.**

# Personal care

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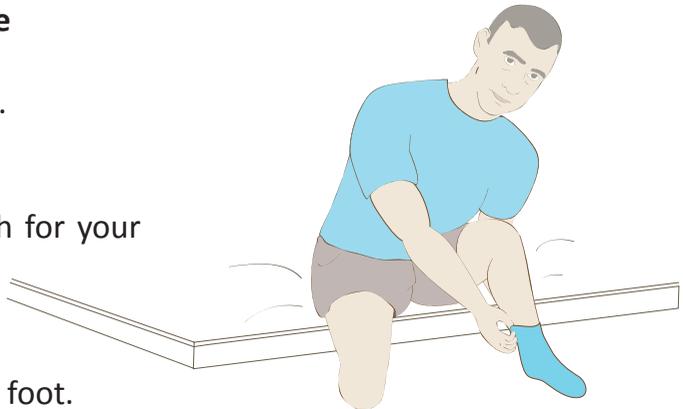
## Dressing your upper body

1. Sit at the edge of your bed or in your wheelchair.
2. Put on your shirt.



## Putting on your sock and shoe

1. Sit at the edge of your bed.
2. Bend your knee and reach for your foot with your hand(s).
3. Place sock or shoe on your foot.



**If you cannot reach your foot, equipment such as sock aid and a long handle shoe horn may be useful. Your occupational therapist can give you this equipment.**

# Personal care

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## Hygiene

### Washing at the sink

1. Prepare your personal care products (e.g. soap, tooth brush, tooth paste, towels etc.).
2. Place these items on your lap.
3. Go to the sink in your wheelchair.
4. Brush your teeth and wash your face. If you like, you can even wash your body as much as you comfortably and safely can.



**If you need help you should ask the orderly to assist you.**

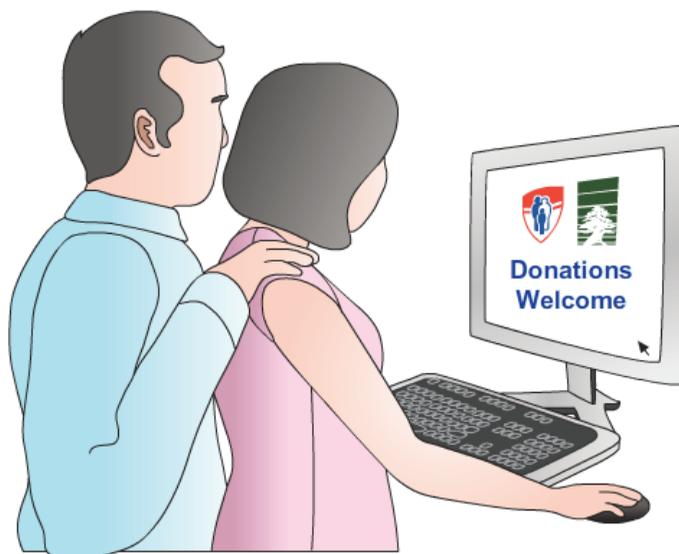


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All patient materials are freely available on the internet to MUHC patients, and to patients and families across the world at large.

Call the Cedar's Cancer Institute to donate: 514-934-1934, ext. 71619.



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