

## Activities of Daily Living After a Craniotomy

*For your healing and safety*

*This handout gives guidelines to follow to help your healing and keep you safe after your craniotomy (a type of brain surgery).*

### Self-care

You may need lots of rest at first. Plan your days to include a lot of rest breaks.

Also, be sure to:

- Get a good night's rest.
- Get dressed every day.
- Eat healthy meals.
- Slowly resume hobbies and social activities you enjoy.



*You will need a lot of rest while you heal after surgery.*

### For Your Safety

For 2 weeks after your surgery:

- Avoid lifting, pushing, or pulling anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of milk weighs almost 9 pounds.)
- When you bend over at the hips, keep your head above your heart. Avoid bending more than 90 degrees.
- Avoid holding your breath and bearing down when doing any activity.
- Avoid itching, scratching, or touching your incision with your hands.

### Getting Dressed

- Avoid wearing wool caps or other headwear. It is important to keep your incision dry and free of sweat.
- Avoid bending over at your hips to put on socks and shoes. If you can, lift your foot up, or place it on a footstool.
- If it is hard for you to reach your feet, use a sock aid, reacher/grabber, dressing stick, or long-handled shoehorn for taking off and putting on your pants, socks, and shoes. Your occupational therapist (OT) can show you how to use these tools.

## Showers

- Wait at least 48 hours after your surgery to shower.
- Have someone help you the first few times you shower, until you feel sure about your safety.
- Avoid spraying water directly on your incision. Allow water, soap, and shampoo to gently run over your incision.
- It is OK to wash your hair. Avoid rubbing or scratching your incision.
- To avoid slipping in the shower, wear sandals or shoes with non-slip tread, or use a non-slip bath mat.
- Your OT may advise you to use a shower chair or tub transfer bench to sit on while you shower. This can keep you safe during your shower and help save your energy.

## Activities

For 2 weeks or until your care team tells you otherwise:

- You will need help around the house. Ask someone else to help you by:
  - Doing chores such as vacuuming, sweeping, making meals, raking, digging, mowing, and other heavy housework.
  - Lifting anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. This includes groceries, pets, children, laundry, trash, and more.
  - Opening tight jars, heavy doors, and stuck windows.
- Do **not**:
  - Ski, run, ride a horse, or do other activities that bounce your body.
  - Swim or cover your incision with water.
  - Drive while you are taking prescription pain medicine. These drugs affect your ability to make decisions and react quickly. They make driving unsafe.

## Sexual Activity

You can resume sexual activity as you wish, depending on how your recovery is going. Use common sense and follow your safety precautions (see “For Your Safety” on page 1). Feel free to ask your OT or doctor for advice.

## Be Patient with Yourself

It is normal to feel tired, stressed, irritated, or depressed after this surgery. Some people feel they cannot think clearly. Do not make yourself do tasks that are frustrating. Talk with your provider if you have these feelings or feel overwhelmed by them.

### Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Occupational Therapy: Call 206.598.4830 weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m.