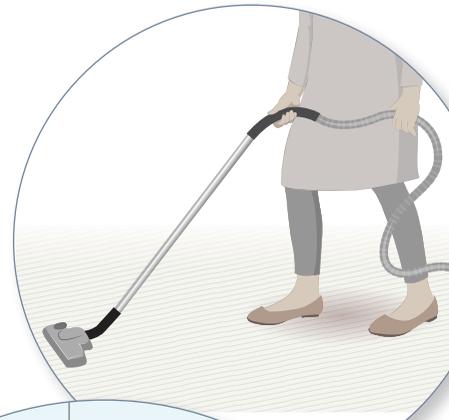


Living Safely with Bone Metastases



Did you know that if cancer has spread to your bones, you are at a higher risk of a bone break (fracture)?

The good news is that you can lower your risk.
Learn here how to move safely.



School of

PHYSICAL & OCCUPATIONAL
Therapy



Hôpital général juif
Jewish General Hospital

Acknowledgements

This booklet was created by faculty and students of McGill's School of Physical and Occupational Therapy, in collaboration with the McGill University Health Centre (MUHC) and Jewish General Hospital (JGH).

The development of this booklet was inspired by and dedicated to individuals living with cancer, so they can maintain a good quality of life by being mindful of their posture and their surroundings.

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We would like to thank the **MUHC Patient Education Office** for their support throughout the development of this material, including the writing, the design, layout, as well as for the creation of all images.

IMPORTANT : PLEASE READ

Information provided by this booklet is for educational purposes. It is not intended to replace the advice or instruction of a professional healthcare practitioner, or to substitute medical care. Contact a qualified healthcare practitioner if you have any questions concerning your care.

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Patient Education Office



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A message for you and your family

A bone can fracture in many ways. It can be caused by just a small movement or can result from a bad fall.

Research has shown that you can keep your bones strong and lower the chances of fracture(s) by practicing healthy posture and learning how to move safely.

Based on our clinical knowledge and the experience of our patients and their families, we have designed this practical, user-friendly booklet to help you.

It covers important information on how to avoid falls and fractures. We have also included tips and strategies on how to make your environment safe, and general recommendations for exercise. Finally, we highlight when to call your health care team and who to consult for more information. We have also included a “Questions? Comments?” box at the end of each section where we encourage you to write down any concerns or questions you may have.

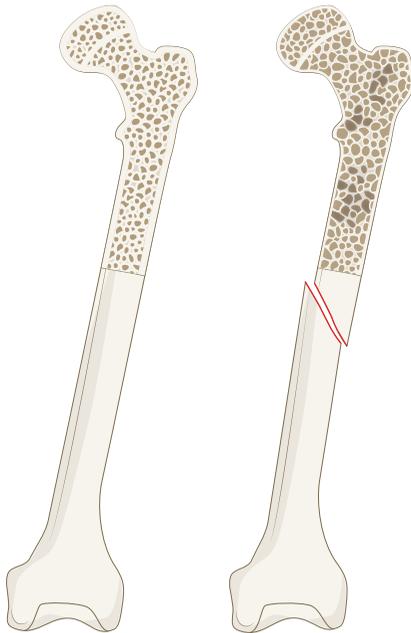
Please review this booklet carefully and speak with your health care team to discuss the best care plan for you.

The information in this booklet may be used by cancer patients with bone metastases or other bone diseases (e.g. multiple myeloma).

What are cancer and bone metastases?

Cancer is a disease in which cells grow out of control. If they are left alone, cancer cells will continue to grow. Sometimes, these cells may escape and travel to other parts of the body. When they settle in new areas and continue to grow, these new growths are called **metastases**. These are not new cancers, but the same cancer growing in another part of your body.

Bone is a common area where cancer cells may spread. These are called **bone metastases**. If this happens, you may have the following signs and symptoms:

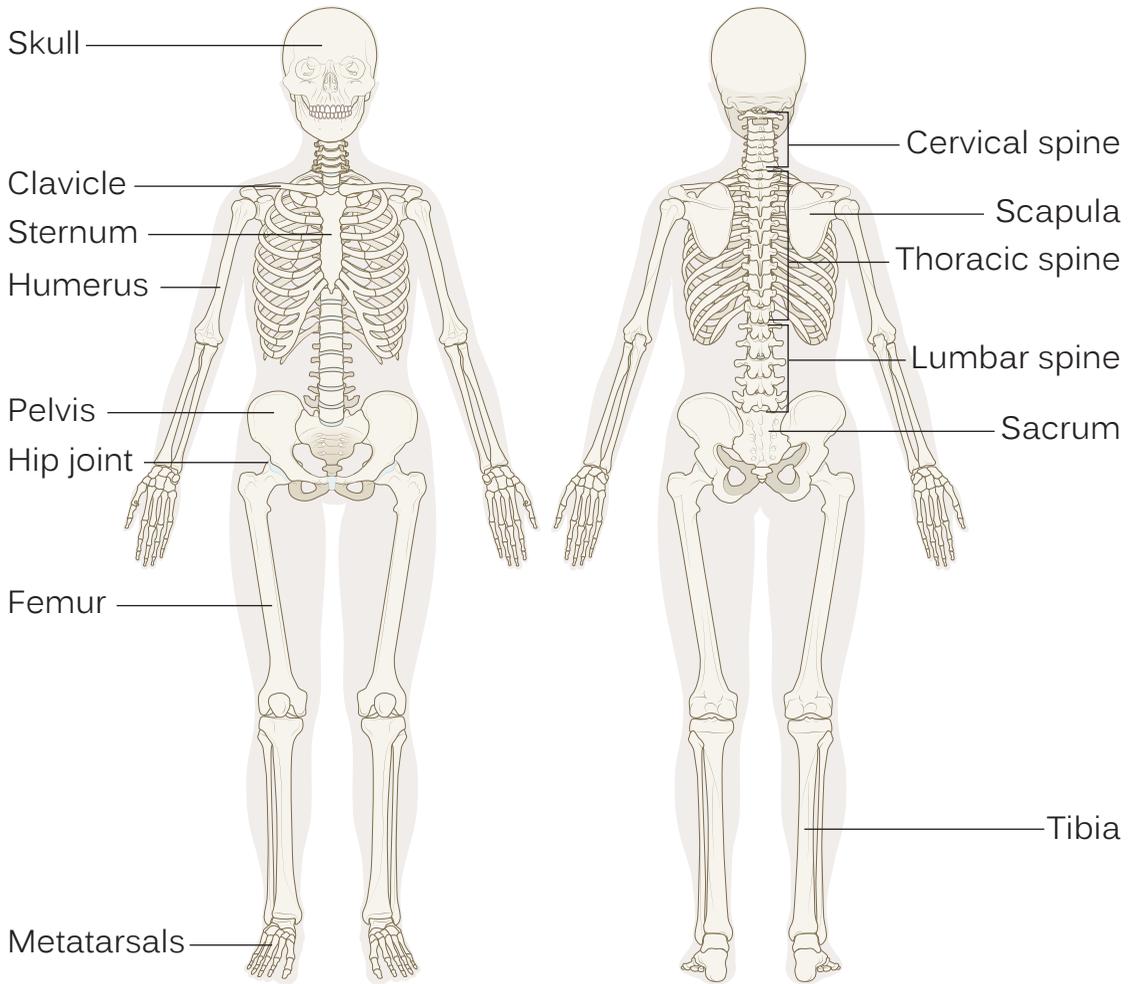


- Bone pain
- Swelling or bruising over a bone
- A bone may change shape, look distorted or crooked (deformity)
- Difficulty with movement (e.g. walking, stairs)
- Difficulty doing everyday tasks (e.g. getting in and out of bed)

Bone metastases may make your bones fragile and weak. This may increase your risk of fracture.

If you notice any of the above signs and symptoms in any area of your body, inform your health care team immediately.

On the skeleton below, circle where your bone metastases are located:



Questions? Comments?

How can I prevent a fracture?

1. Move with care

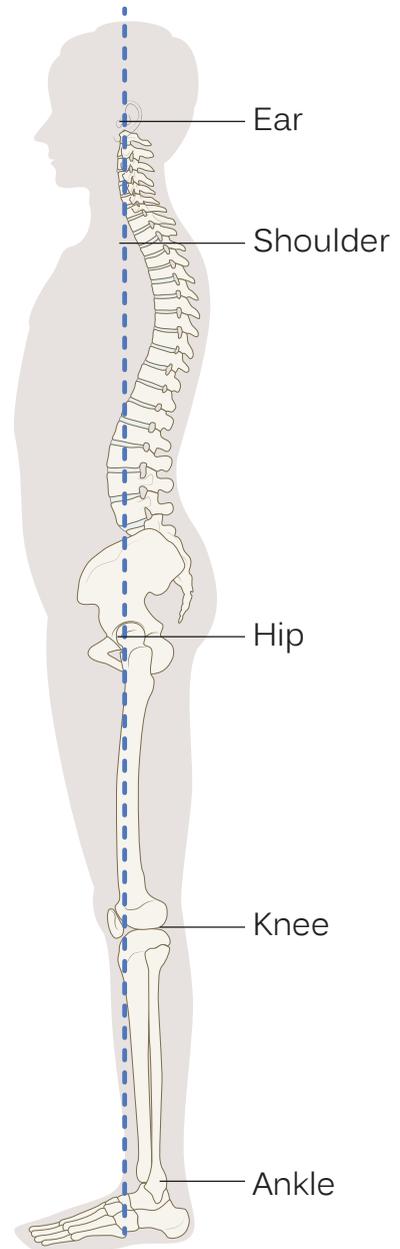
Posture refers to how you position your body whether you are standing, sitting, lying down or moving.

1.1 Always maintain good posture

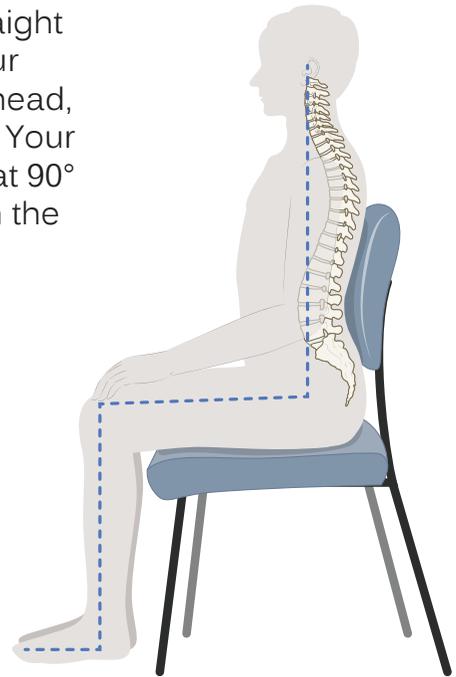
When standing, picture an imaginary line that starts at the top of your head and continues down to the bottom of your feet. Keep your back straight by making sure that your ear, shoulder, hip, knee and ankle are lined up with each other.

To maintain good posture, avoid:

- slumping or hunching over
- twisting
- bending from the waist
- any movement that requires a far reach



When sitting, picture a straight line coming down from your ear to your hip. Keep your head, shoulders and back in line. Your hips and knees should be at 90° angles and your feet flat on the ground.



When lying down, lie on a firm surface and support the curve of your back by putting pillows underneath your head and knees.



Healthy posture is the key to preventing fractures.

Questions? Comments?

1.2 Avoid bending forward

Don't

- Bend from the hips to lift, as this places tension on your spine and shoulders.

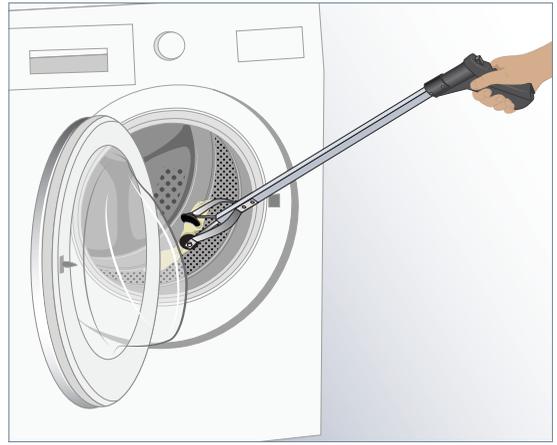


Do



- Stand with your feet apart at shoulder width. Keep your knees slightly bent.

In this position, you can transfer your weight from one leg to the other.



- Use a tool (e.g. a “reacher”) to pick up small and light objects. This will help you to avoid bending your back.



- Stand close to what you want to lift.
- Squat by bending knees, keeping back straight.

Questions? Comments?

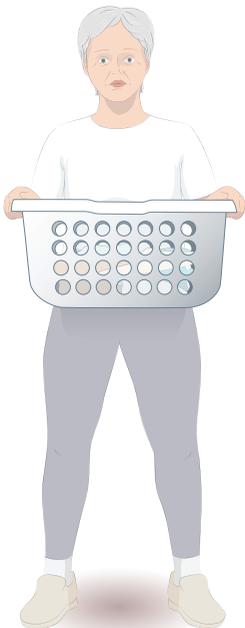
1.3 Avoid twisting

Don't

- Twist your back.



Do



- Lift object with feet and body in same direction.
- Turn your feet in the same direction as your body.

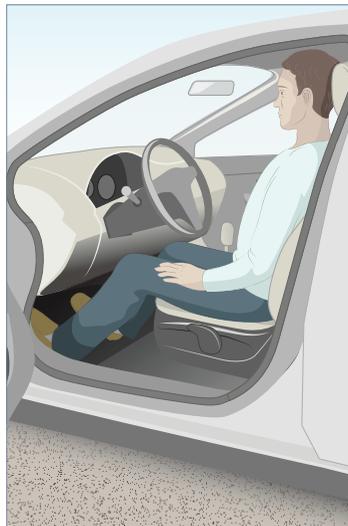




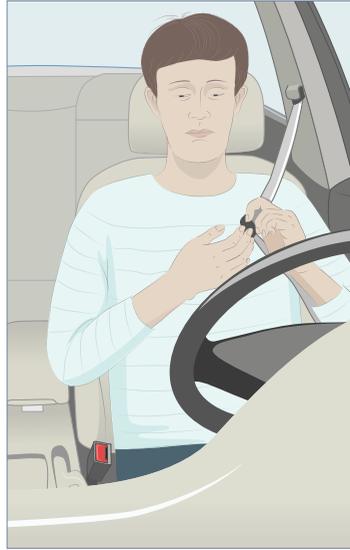
- Facing away from the car, put your hands on the seat or door frame. Bend your knees and sit on the car seat, keeping back straight.



- Sitting sideways on the seat, swing both legs as a unit into car, keeping your back straight while turning your body. If you can't swing both legs, lift one leg at a time into the car. Be careful not to hit your head.



- Facing forward, sit upright with your feet placed firmly on floor. Adjust your back support and headrest to comfortably support your spine. Adjust seat so your feet comfortably reach the foot pedals.
- *To get out of the car, do the same steps in reverse order.



- To pull the seat belt down, use your hand closest to the side of the seat belt.

Questions? Comments?

2. Stay safe in different environments

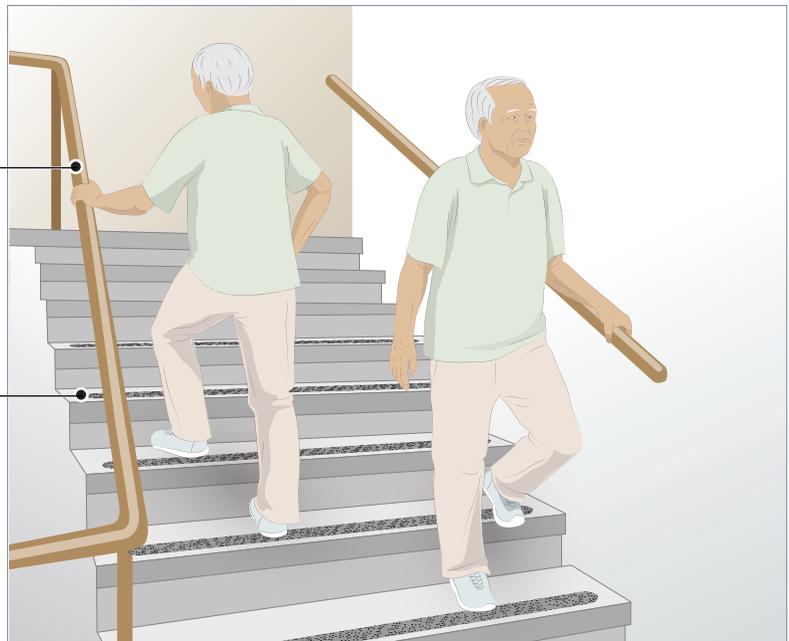
Organize and adapt your home and workplace to make your surroundings safe and to prevent the risk of falls. In this section, we outline strategies for safety in everyday environments that you will encounter (e.g. stairs, office, bathroom, kitchen, and bedroom).

2.1 Using stairs

When going up the stairs, step up first using your stronger leg.

Always use the handrail, if available.

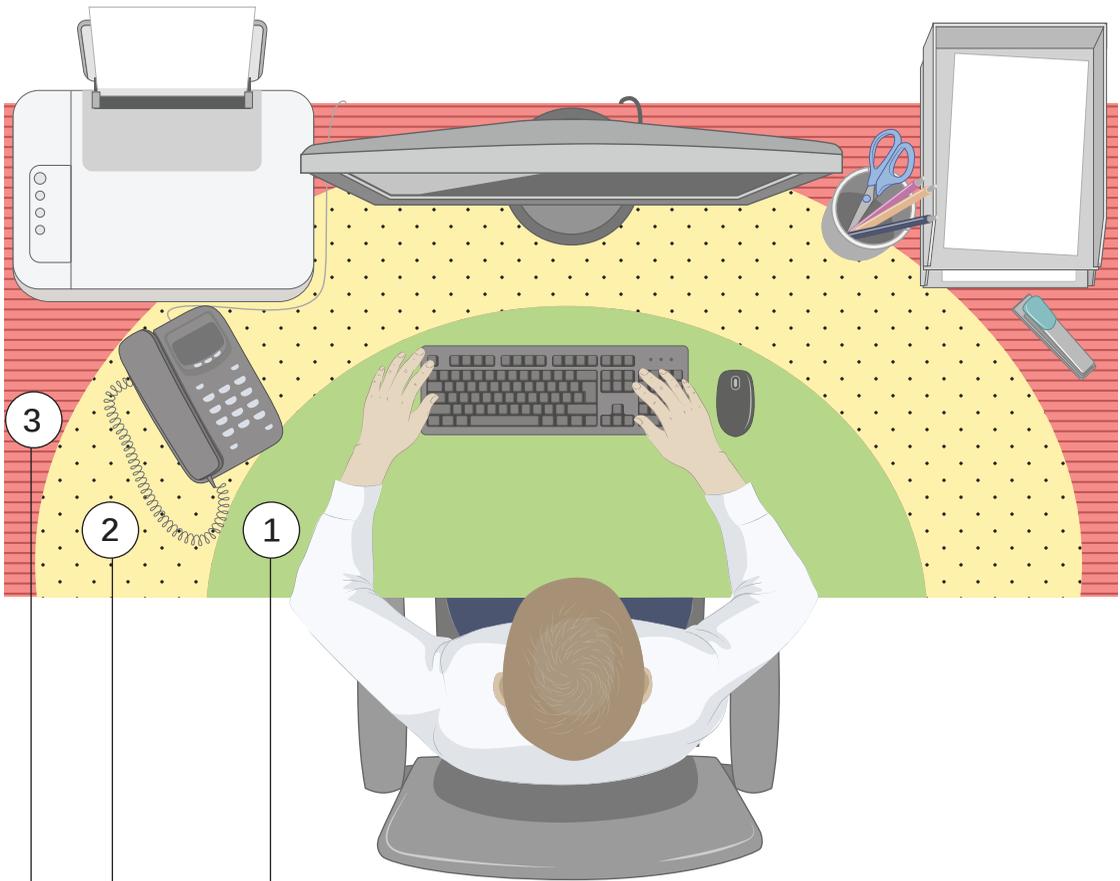
Use anti-slip tape to help prevent falls.



When going down the stairs, step down slowly with your weaker leg.

2.2 At the office

Organize your desk so it works for you.

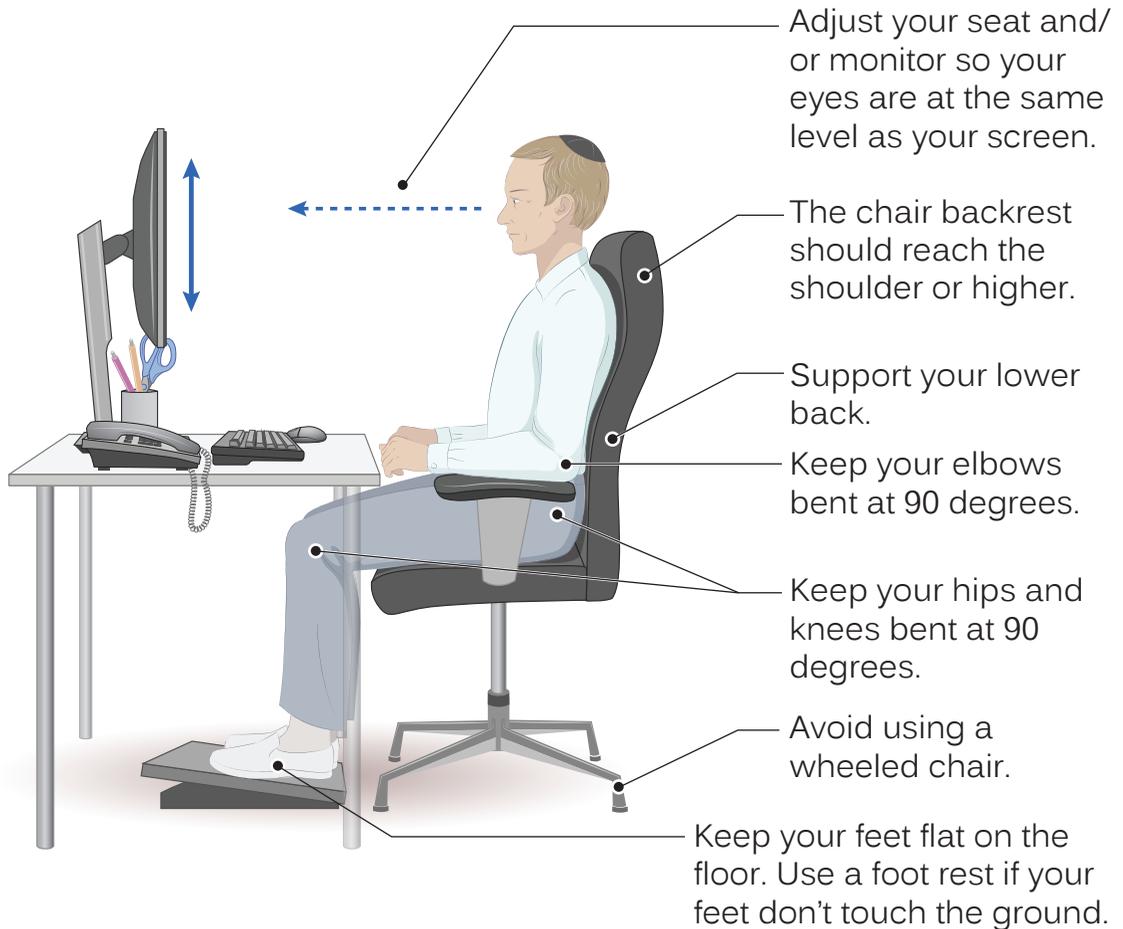


1. Keep the items you use all the time at **elbow distance**.

2. Keep items you use every day (but not all the time) at **arm distance**.

3. Keep the items that you do not use every day further away.

Maintain good posture while seated at your desk.



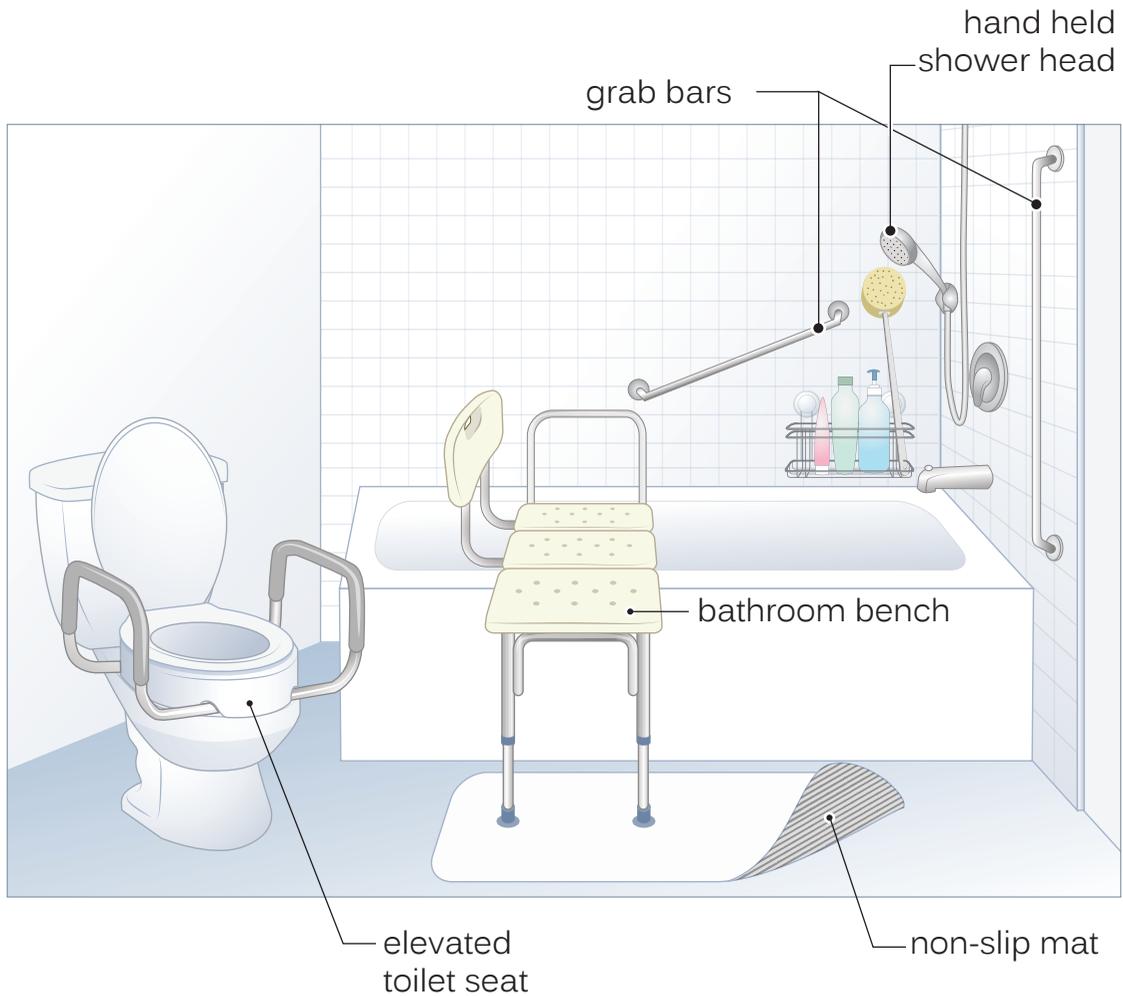
*Remember to take a break. Get up and walk around every 30 minutes.

*Consult an occupational therapist for an individualized ergonomic assessment of your working space.

Questions? Comments?

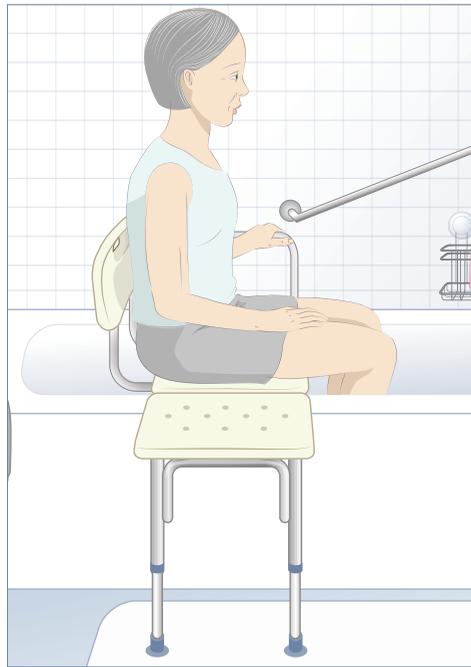
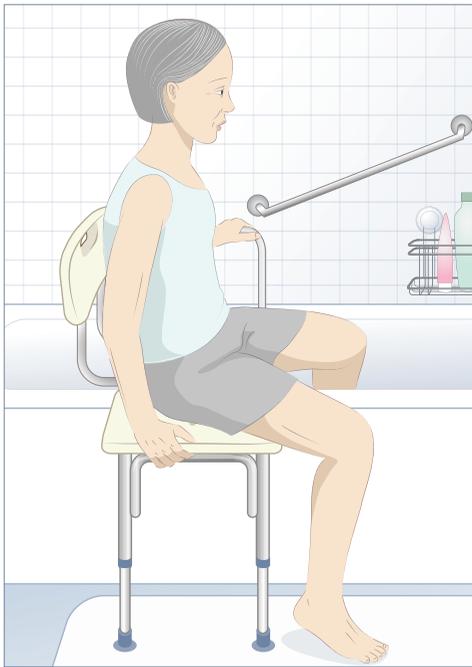
2.3 In the bathroom

Slips and falls commonly occur in the bathroom. Adapt your bathroom to lower the chances of a fall and your risk of fracture.



Move into and out of the bathtub with care.

- Keep your back straight.
- Avoid twisting.



Move onto and rise from the toilet with care.

- Use bars to help you sit or stand.

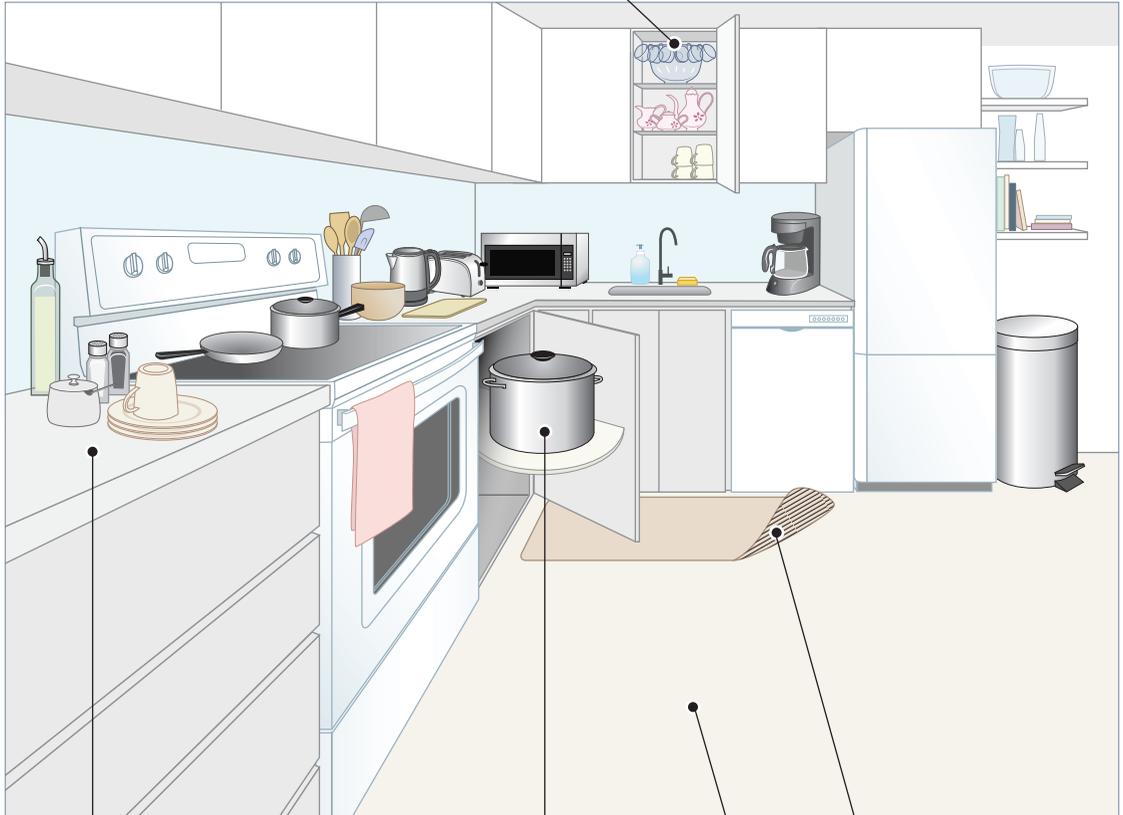


Questions? Comments?

2.4 In the kitchen

Organize your kitchen items based on how you use them.

Place items you rarely use (e.g. fine china) in cupboards.



Place items you use everyday (e.g. pots and pans) on the counter.

Store heavy pots at waist height.

Use a non-slip mat.

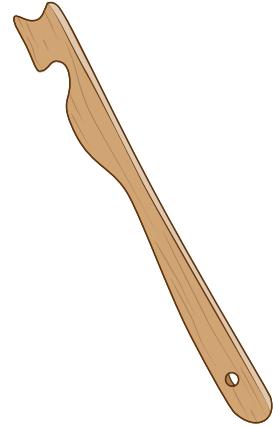
Remove all clutter from the floor. Clutter can lead to accidents and falls.

When preparing meals, reach for items with care.



- Use **a stool** to help you reach items that are placed high.
- Do not stand on tiptoes or stretch up high above your shoulder.

Questions? Comments?



- Use a “reacher” to pull out a dish, tray or oven rack. Squat down when you do this.
- Do not bend your back.



2.5 In the bedroom

Keep your bedroom well-lit and clutter-free. Note that this applies to every room of your home to ensure safety.

Use bright lighting to better see your belongings and furniture.



Secure cords to the wall.

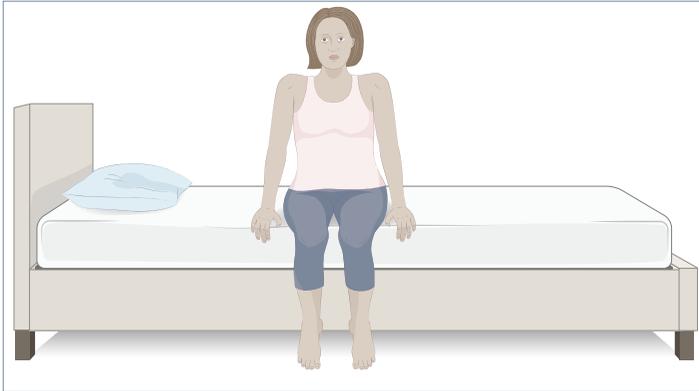
Keep your floor clutter-free.



Please consult with your physiotherapist or occupational therapist for position modifications during sexual activity.

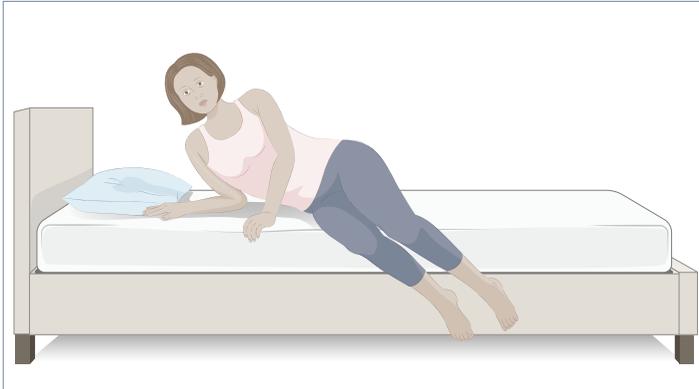
Questions? Comments?

Move into and out of bed with care.



To get into bed:

1. Use your arms to lower yourself on the bed.
2. Pivot your whole body (not at the waist) to lift your feet onto the bed.
3. Lie down on your side then roll onto your back.



To get out of bed:

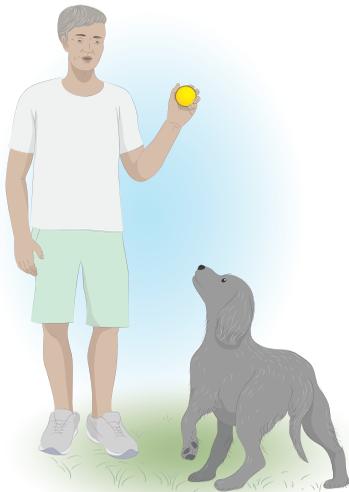
1. Roll onto your side.
2. Drop your feet off the bed.
3. Use your arms to push yourself up.



To roll safely in bed, bend your knees and keep them shoulder width apart. Roll your body as a single unit to preferred side.

3. Follow an exercise program prescribed by a physical therapist

Always consult with a physical therapist specialized in cancer rehabilitation before starting any exercise or sport. They will work with you to make sure that your exercise program:



- Is safe, considering you have bone metastases
- Has maximum health benefits to improve and maintain your muscle and bone strength
- Is customized to your cardiovascular and overall fitness levels
- Is adapted to your individual needs

If you have any questions about your exercise program, write them below and speak to a physical therapist specialized in cancer rehabilitation.

Questions? Comments?



When should I call or go to the hospital?

If you are finding it difficult to apply these tips and strategies in your everyday routines or you have other questions or concerns, please let us know. We are here to help.

Call your nurse or doctor, if you notice new or sudden worsening in:

- Pain
- Weakness
- Numbness
- Coordination of movement or everyday tasks
- Your ability to have sex
- Bowel and bladder functioning

To reach your emergency contact, call:



.....
at (.....)

.....
at (.....)

Looking for more information?

If you need more information about safe living or exercising with bone metastases, speak to the appropriate expert on your oncology care team:

- **Occupational therapists** are experts who can guide you in adapting your home and work settings for safety in your activities of daily living, and who can recommend equipment and strategies for safe movement.
- **Physical therapists** are experts who can guide you to move safely, use assistive devices if needed, prescribe safe exercise, and adapt sports and leisure activities to your individual needs.
- **Doctors and nurses** are experts who can guide you in your care and pain control. They can direct you to any other health care professional as needed.

Do keep in mind that the information in this booklet should not replace any instructions you receive from your therapist, doctor, nurse or any other member of your health care team. Knowing your unique health situation and using their expertise, they will discuss the best care plan for you.

Additional Resources



www.cedars.ca



www.hopeandcope.ca

Visit the Patient Education Collection
www.muhcpatienteducation.ca

