

## **A Therapy Guide to Foot & Ankle Surgery and Recovery**



## Welcome

We are glad that you have chosen Dr. Miller for your foot and ankle surgery. Our goal is to make this experience as pleasant as possible for you. If you have any questions about your hospital stay, rehabilitation or recovery period, please contact Dr. Miller's office for more information specific to your surgery.

This guide is to help you:

1. Understand what to expect during your surgery and recovery (Page 3)
2. Prepare your house for a safe return home after your surgery (Page 4)
3. Know what to bring to the hospital or surgical center on the day of surgery (Page 8)
4. Understand what to expect on the day of surgery and if you stay in the hospital overnight (Page 9)
5. Learn exercises to do at home before and after surgery (Page 12)
6. Review ways to move around safely after your surgery to protect yourself (Page 15)
7. Local places to obtain ambulatory aids (Page 23)

## What to Expect During Your Surgery and Recovery

To help protect the surgery you are having done, sometimes Dr. Miller will want you to keep the operated foot off the ground at all times. This is called **non-weight bearing** and means you cannot put any weight at all on the operated foot, until Dr. Miller says that it is safe to do so. You generally return to the doctor for a follow-up visit about 8-14 days after surgery.



After the surgery, your foot will be wrapped up in a large, bulky splint or soft dressing to protect the foot and ankle. Dr. Miller initially uses these splints instead of a cast, because the foot will swell after surgery. These splints may feel very heavy because you have just had surgery. When you return to Dr. Miller, he will remove the splint and replace it with a smaller, lighter cast or boot.

Dr. Miller will want you to rest as much as possible right after surgery. Your foot will swell, and may become painful, when it is left hanging down. So, when you are sitting or lying down, keep the leg elevated above your heart to help keep the swelling down and reduce pain.



## Prepare Your Home

To plan ahead for you returning home after surgery, check your house to see how you can make it safe and comfortable while you are recuperating. Here is a list of things to look for and consider **BEFORE** you come into the hospital:



### Entrance

- ❑ How will you get into/out of your house after surgery?
- ❑ Do you have to climb steps? How many?
- ❑ Do your steps have railings?
- ❑ Is there an easier way in **without steps** that you can use?

**Hint:** Have a plan to get into your house the easiest way—and practice that entry method **before** your surgery.

### Driving

- ❑ You will **NOT** be able to drive immediately after your surgery. At your follow-up visit with Dr. Miller about 10-14 days after surgery, you will learn when you are allowed to drive again.

#### ***Factors that affect driving after foot and ankle surgery:***

- Use of pain medication
- Which foot is operated on
- How driving motions of the foot may impact the surgical site

### Medications

- ❑ Dr. Miller will prescribe pain medicine to help keep you comfortable while you are recuperating after surgery. You will leave the hospital with a prescription for this medicine. Pain medications cannot be called into a pharmacy by Dr. Miller, so you will need someone to take the prescription to a pharmacy to get it filled for you.

**Hint:** Before surgery, find a pharmacy near your home (24 hour pharmacies with weekend hours are very convenient) where you can bring a prescription to have your pain medicine filled—in case you go home on Saturday afternoon or Sunday when the hospital pharmacy is closed or you are having surgery at the surgical center.

## Prepare Your Home (Continued)

### Bedroom

- ? Where will you sleep at home after surgery?
- ? Do you have to climb stairs to get to the bedroom?
- ? Can you get a walker, crutches or a wheelchair through the bedroom door and to the bed?
- ? Can you sleep on the first floor to avoid climbing steps?

### Bathroom

- ? Is your bathroom accessible?
- ? Can you get a walker, crutches or a wheelchair through the door?
- ? Do you have to climb stairs to get to the bathroom?
- ? How will you bathe?

### Bathing

- ? **NO tub bath until cleared to do so by Dr. Miller.**
- ? You will **not** be able to get your foot wet while you have a splint.
- ? If Dr. Miller says it is OK for you to shower, you will need to cover the splint with a plastic bag to keep it dry in the shower.

**Hint:** A **shower chair** or a **tub bench** allows you to sit down and shower safely after surgery.

### Kitchen

- ? Keep a supply of easy to cook meals on hand.
- ? Frozen dinners are quick and require minimal preparation.
- ? Keep frequently used items within easy reach on countertops and in the refrigerator.
- ? If possible, plan to have someone assist you with grocery shopping.

### Laundry

- ? Is your laundry room accessible?
- ? Are the washer and dryer difficult to reach?
- ? Consider asking a family member or friend to assist you with your laundry.

### Rugs

- ? Throw rugs or scatter rugs are very dangerous because they have potential to trip you.

**Hint:** Remove all throw rugs or scatter rugs before you come in for surgery.

### Pets

- ? It can be dangerous for people who use equipment (walker, crutches or wheelchair) to walk and move around with pets under foot.
- ? Taking care of a pet (walking a dog, cleaning a kitty litter box, etc.) can be very difficult when you are not able to stand on your operated leg after surgery.

## Prepare Your Home (Continued)



**If you are planning on using a wheelchair at home, please consider:**

- Doorways must be at least 28" wide across for a standard wheelchair to fit.
- Wheelchairs may be lifted up **ONE** step or curb with the patient in them –your therapist can show you how this is done safely.

***Hint:* More than one step is very difficult to climb safely in a wheelchair and is not recommended.**

- Bathrooms must be at least 28" wide for a wheelchair to fit.

***Hint:* If the bathroom is not wide enough, you will need a bedside commode for toileting (see Durable Medical Equipment on page 3).**

- ❓ Carpet makes it harder to push a wheelchair.

***Hint:* Remove all throw rugs for safety!**

- ❓ In the kitchen, make sure you can reach commonly used items from wheelchair height.

***Hint:* You may need to re-arrange some items for easier access.**

## General Home Safety Tips

1. Wear footwear that gives you good support and traction. Tennis shoes/sneakers with good tread on the bottom are great options.
2. Install non-skid mats on the shower or tub floor.
3. A hand-held shower can make showering much easier after surgery.
4. Make sure feet are dry before getting out of tub, so you don't slip.
5. Sit on a sturdy chair while brushing teeth, shaving, applying makeup, cooking, etc.
6. **Do not sit on chairs that have wheels.**
7. Sit in firm chairs with armrests. They are much easier to get up from.
8. If you are using a walker, do NOT hold things in your hand as you use your walker. Walker bags are available for purchase on-line or at local pharmacies.

### Durable Medical Equipment:

You may require assistance with special equipment at home for some time after surgery. Your therapy team will recommend specific items, and your case manager will assist you with getting the equipment you need. This equipment is not paid for by insurance, so you are encouraged to explore other options when buying equipment. Below is equipment commonly used after orthopedic surgery, as well as stores and websites where they can be purchased in preparation for your surgery.

RAISED TOILET SEAT  
(\$20-30)



RAISED TOILET SEAT WITH ARMS  
(\$50-60)



SHOWER BENCH  
(\$30-60)



EXTENDED TUB BENCH  
(\$80-100)



BEDSIDE COMMUNE  
(\$80 AND UP)



SAFETY/GRAB BARS  
(\$15 AND UP)



### Where to purchase equipment:

- Amazon.com • CVS • Drugstore.com • eBay • Healthsuperstore.com • Home Depot • Lowe's
- Northern Pharmacy • Target • Walgreens • Wal-Mart

## What to Bring to the Hospital

- **Driver's license** or passport for identification
- **Insurance cards**
- Copies of advance directives or living will (if you have them)
- **Medication list**  
Write down a list of all the medicines you take, dosages and the time of day you take them, including over-the-counter drugs and prescription medicines.

### DO NOT BRING ANY MEDICATIONS FROM HOME!

- **Clothes:** pajamas, underwear, socks, shirts  
You will have a big, bulky dressing on your leg so loose-fitting clothing is recommended for your lower body, such as sweat pants or shorts.
- **Footwear:** rubber-soled shoes with good traction (such as tennis shoes)  
Please do not wear backless shoes for safety.
- **Toiletries:** soap, shampoo, shaving items, toothbrush, toothpaste, comb, make-up, brush, deodorant
- **Personal equipment:** glasses, hearing aids, dentures
- **Assistive devices:** crutches, walker, or wheelchair. If you have your own equipment, please bring it with you and label it with your name. If you do not have any equipment, necessary items will be provided for you at the hospital or surgical center through your insurance.
- **C-PAP** or external breathing devices  
If you typically use assistive breathing devices at home, please bring them with you and label them with your name. Your nursing team will discuss arrangements for using them while in the hospital.
- **Family member or caregiver**  
Your caregiver participates in family training with the team and takes you home when you are discharged from the hospital.



## Day of Surgery

Prior to surgery, a simple step you can take to enhance your successful recovery is carefully washing your skin the night before, or preferably, the morning of your surgery. This helps decrease the number of germs on the skin, reducing the risk of infection. If you have had an injury and currently have a splint on, please wash the rest of your body keeping the splint dry. Follow these instructions to ensure that your skin is clean before surgery:

- Shower with an antibacterial liquid soap containing the ingredient chlorhexidine gluconate or CHG (brand name is Hibiclens). The soap can be purchased at most local pharmacies. Purchase the 4 ounce bottle with the main active ingredient being chlorhexidine gluconate. *Note: if you are allergic to chlorhexidine, do not use this soap and tell your nurse when you arrive at the location of surgery.*
- Wash your hair first using your normal shampoo. Thoroughly rinse your hair and body of any shampoo.
- Follow manufacturer's instructions when applying CHG to the entire body from the neck down (including under arms and groin). *Avoid contact with your face, head, eyes, ears, mouth and genital area.* Gently wash your body, especially the area where surgery will be performed, and leave soap on for 3 minutes.
- Rinse your body thoroughly and gently pat dry using a clean, dry towel. Do not apply lotion or perfume to your body after showering with CHG soap.
- Wear freshly laundered sleepwear and sleep on clean sheets.
- Wear clean, comfortable clothing on the day of your surgery.
- If you are unable to purchase CHG or forget to shower with it, please inform the nurse when you check in for surgery.

You will receive information from the hospital or the Surgical Center and Dr. Miller's office that provides instructions regarding procedures.

On the day of your surgery, please arrive at the hospital or surgical center at least two hours prior to your scheduled surgery or when otherwise instructed to arrive. If at the hospital, be sure to sign in as a visitor at the entrance and proceed to the Admitting Department to register.

After you register, you will proceed to the preoperative area, where the experienced staff of nurses will assist you. You will also meet with Dr. Miller and the anesthesiologist at that time. Next, you will move into the operating room, where the nurses will prepare you for surgery and Dr. Miller will perform your surgery.

After surgery, you will be taken to the Post Anesthesia Care Unit where you will stay until you wake up after surgery. This is also known as the recovery room.

From the Recovery Room, you may be transferred to the orthopaedic inpatient unit in the hospital, or you may be discharged to home with your caregiver/family.

## **Day of Surgery**

### **If You Stay in the Hospital Overnight**

Before you are discharged from the hospital, our goal is to make sure you are safe to return home. The day after surgery, a physical therapist (PT) will come to see you in your room. The PT will inquire about your home situation and any equipment that you have or may need. The therapist will also assess and train you in the skills you need in order to go home safely. These skills include moving around in bed, transferring from the bed and chair, moving from sitting to standing and walking with the appropriate assistive device—all while not putting any weight on the foot/ankle that had surgery. If you have difficulty with your activities of daily living, such as bathing, dressing or moving safely around the bathroom, you may also see an occupational therapist (OT).

In addition to your safety, our goal is to help you manage your pain. Your nurse will assist you with pain medication. Keeping the foot elevated above your heart when you are in bed or sitting in a chair and using ice on the foot/ankle can also help to reduce pain.

## Going Home from the Hospital

You must arrange for someone to drive you home after surgery. This is best completed **before** surgery. You will **NOT** be able to drive home, and you may not drive until cleared to do so by Dr. Miller.

### Getting In and Out Of the Car

#### Front Seat Car Transfer:

1. Prior to car entry, make sure the seat is back completely from the dashboard and the back of the seat is reclined. This enables you more leg room to swing the operative leg into the car.
2. Turn around so you are facing away from the car and back up to the car with your walker/crutches.
3. When you feel the back of your legs touch the seat, reach one hand back for the seat and bend at your waist to lower yourself down. **Keep your operative leg off of the ground!**
4. Swing your operative leg in gently.



## Home Exercise Program

It is important to continue an exercise regimen after discharge to help improve your overall physical conditioning after surgery. This includes general exercises that help build muscle tone and flexibility, without putting strain on the affected joint. These will be taught while you are in the hospital. If you are an outpatient, consult with Dr. Miller before beginning these exercises. As an inpatient, you will be taught these exercises by the therapy staff. *Do not perform exercises to the operative area. Your splint/sandal/dressings are meant to protect the area of surgery and immobilization in this area is crucial to outcomes. Otherwise perform as directed.*

### Exercise 1-Ankle pumps

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LEG / KNEE / ANKLE - 4 ANKLE: Pump – Supine



On uninvolved foot, point toes toward floor then toward nose.

Repeat 10 times. Do 2 times per day.

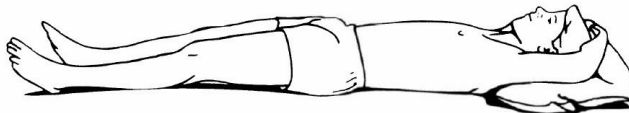
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### Exercise 2-Gluteal Squeezes

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TRUNK STABILITY - 24  
Isometric Gluteals



Tighten buttock muscles. Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times per session. Do 2 sessions per day.

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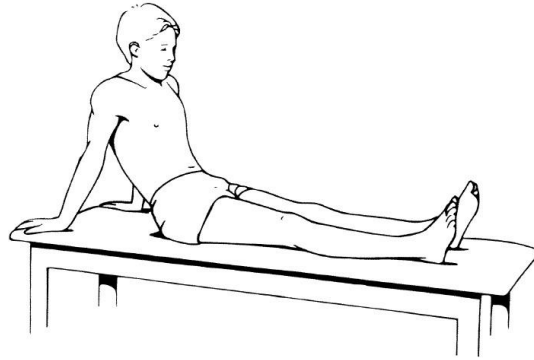
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## Home Exercise Program (Continued)

### Exercise 3-Quad Sets

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HIP / KNEE - 11  
Strengthening: Quadriceps Sets



Tighten muscles on top of thigh by pushing knees down into surface. Hold 5 seconds.

Repeat 10 times. Do 2 sessions per day.

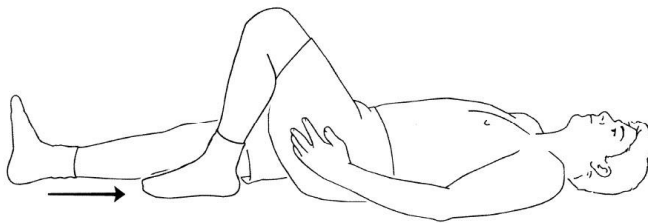
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### Exercise 4-Heel Slides

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LEG / KNEE / ANKLE - 3 KNEE: Heel Slide – Supine



Beginning with toes pointed toward ceiling and knees straight, slide involved heel toward buttocks while bending knee.

Repeat 10 times. Do 2 times per day.

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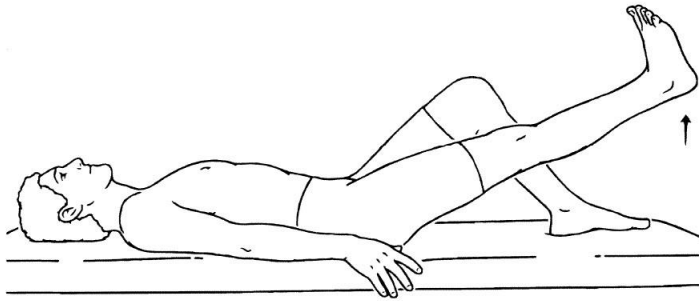
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## Home Exercise Program (Continued)

### Exercise 5-Straight Leg Raises

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HIP / KNEE - 17 Strengthening: Straight Leg Raise  
(Phase 1)



On operated leg, tighten muscles on front of thigh, then lift leg 12 inches from surface, keeping knee locked.

Repeat 10 times per set. Do 2 sets per session.

Do 2 sessions per day.

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## Safe Mobility after Surgery

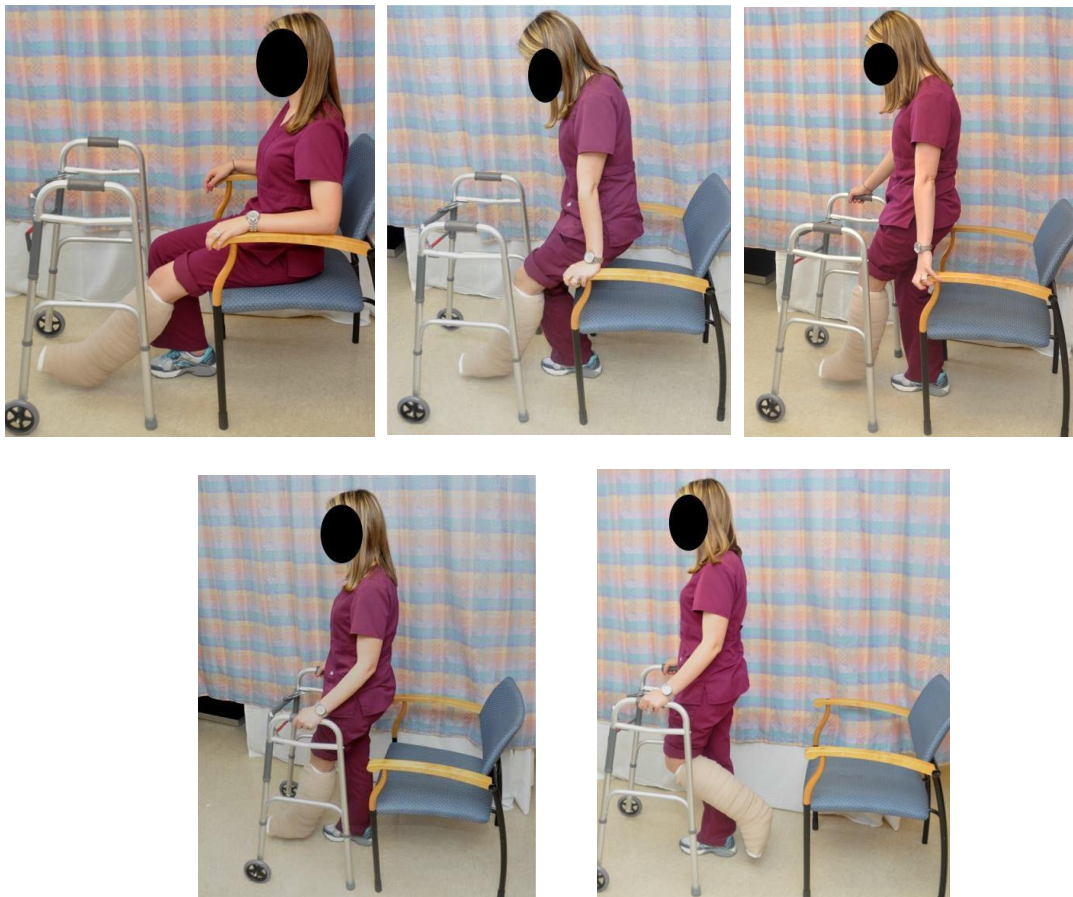
**THIS INFORMATION IS FOR REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY! \*\*Please DO NOT TRY THIS AT HOME until you have been properly trained by our therapy or nursing staff. \*\***

### Chair Transfers Using a Walker

#### To stand up:

1. Scoot forward in the chair until you are sitting on the edge.
2. Lean forward and push down through the armrests, using your non-operative leg to stand up.
3. Keep your operated foot off the floor.
4. Once standing, reach for the walker first with one hand, then the other.
5. Get your balance.

**\*\* Remember: It is easiest to get up from a firm, sturdy chair with armrests.**





## Chair Transfers Using a Walker

### To sit down:

1. Back up until you feel the back of your leg touching the chair.
2. Move your operated foot out in front of you, keeping the foot off the ground.
3. Reach back for the arm of the chair first with one hand, then the other.
4. Lower yourself slowly into the chair, keeping your operated foot off the ground.



## Walking with a Walker

1. Advance walker forward so back legs of the walker are even with the toes of the non-operative leg.
2. Slightly lean forward and push down through hands on walker handles so most of your bodyweight is through your arms. Your elbows should be slightly bent.
3. Move your good foot forward until foot is in the middle of the walker, while supporting your body weight on the walker.

***\*\* Remember: Your operated foot should never touch the floor. Do not use it for balance.***





### Stepping Down Off of Curb with a Walker:

1. Bring non-operative foot to the edge of the curb.
2. Place walker down on the ground below the curb.
3. Hold onto the walker and push your weight down through your hands.
4. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you, lower your non-operative leg down onto the ground.



### Climbing Up a Curb using a Walker

1. **Back up** to the curb until the walker legs hit the curb wall.
2. Push your weight down through your hands.
3. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you, lift your good leg on the curb. You will need to get your non-operative foot back as far as possible to allow room for the walker on the curb.
4. Bring walker up onto the curb.



## **Climbing Up a Curb using a Walker and a Chair**

1. Back up to the curb until the walker legs hit the curb wall.
2. Reach back for the chair with first one hand then the other.
3. Lower yourself slowly into the chair, keeping your operated foot off the ground.
4. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you, lift your good leg on the curb.
5. Pivot your body around in the chair so you have room to stand up with the walker.
6. Bring walker up onto the curb.



## Chair Transfers with Crutches

### To stand up:

1. Place both crutches in one hand and hold hand grips. Place the other hand on the arm of the chair.
2. Scoot forward to the edge of the chair.
3. Lean forward and push up with both hands and your good leg, keeping your operated leg off the floor.
4. Get your balance.
5. Place crutches under arms, one at a time.

***Reminder: Be sure to keep your operated foot off of the floor!***





## Chair Transfers with Crutches

### To Sit Down:

1. Approach the chair.
2. Turn around using small steps and back up to the chair, until you feel the chair against the back of your good leg.
3. Place both crutches in one hand.
4. Reach the other hand back for the arm of the chair.
5. Bend forward at the waist and sit down slowly, keeping the operated leg up off the floor.



## Walking with Crutches

1. While balancing on your good leg, move both crutches at the same time.
2. Crutches should be about shoulder width apart and even on the floor.
3. Push down through hands.
4. Step forward with the strong leg, keeping the operated leg off the floor.



## Climbing Up Stairs with Crutches

As a general rule, stairs are not safe with crutches or other assist devices.

## Bumping Up Stairs on Your Bottom

***Setup: Place a step-stool at the top of the stairs, and a chair just behind the stool***

1. Back up to the stairs until your good foot hits the stair.
2. Reach back for the stairs and sit on the step that is at a comfortable height for you (typically the second step from the bottom).
3. Keeping your operated leg out in front of you and off the ground, reach both hands back for the next higher step.
4. Lift (bump) yourself up onto the next step using your arms and your good leg. Continue this way until you reach the top of the stairs.
5. Lift yourself up from the top step onto the step stool.
6. Then, lift yourself up from the stool onto the chair. Swing your legs around to sit fully on the chair and then stand up with your assistive device.



## Chair Transfers with a Knee Walker

### To Stand Up:

1. Scoot forward in the chair until you are sitting on the edge.
2. Lean forward and push down through the armrests and use your non-operative leg to stand up.
3. Keep your operated foot off the floor.
4. Once standing, reach for the knee walker with one hand. Continue holding onto the chair.
5. Pivot your body around and place the knee of your operated leg on the pads.
5. Get your balance and adjust your positioning of your operated leg until you are comfortable.



### To Sit Down:

1. Approach the chair until you are right in front of it.
2. Reach out with one hand and take hold of one arm of the chair.
3. Keeping your operated foot off the floor, pivot your body around so your bottom faces the chair.
4. Bring other hand back to the other arm of the chair.
5. Gently lower yourself down into the chair, keeping your operated foot off the floor.





As you can see from the previous pages, there are a number of ambulatory aides you can use to assist you in maintaining your non-weight bearing status. As the patient, you must feel comfortable with ambulatory aide you choose – everyone is different, just because your friend prefers a knee scooter does not mean you will.

Safety is the number one goal while you are non-weight bearing. Some patients find it beneficial to meet with a physical therapist prior to their surgery to better determine which ambulatory aide is best for them as well as making sure they feel comfortable getting around safely; this is called PREHAB. If this is something you are interested, please contact our office so that we may appropriately get you set up for this.

Many patients do find it extremely beneficial to obtain their ambulatory aid of choice prior to surgery. This allows you to practice using it – even if you do not attend prehab – and increases your comfort level with the device.

If you choose to use a walker or crutches, it is recommended that you be fitted for these as they are height specific – even if you already have them at home. Ensuring that the device is appropriate for you increases your safety and benefits you greatly.

Please feel free to contact our office if you have any questions or concerns.

Below you will find a list of local companies that offer different types of ambulatory aides for patients.

**\*\*PLEASE NOTE: PRICES LISTED BELOW ARE SUBJECT TO  
CHANGE WITHOUT OUR OFFICE BEING NOTIFIED\*\***

**Bioworks: Please call or stop in for availability**

**Summit Office:** 513-354-3710

500 E. Business Way, Cincinnati, OH 45241

**West Office:** 513-354-7799 (call for IN office info also)

6480 Harrison Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45247

**East Office:** 513-247-4359

463 Ohio Pike, Cincinnati, OH 45255

**NKY Office:** 859-905-1006

600 Rodeo Dr, Erlanger, KY 41018

Knee Scooters: Rental Only \$75/month Self Pay

**Mullaney's Pharmacy and Home Health Care**

513-793-6898 9300 Kenwood Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45242

513-587-1468 7846 Cincinnati Dayton Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45069

513-731-1400 6096 Montgomery Rd, Pleasant Ridge, OH 45213

513-587-1474 5907 Cheviot Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45247

Knee Scooters: Rental Only for \$69/month Self Pay

**Queen City Med Mart, Inc.**

513-733-8100 10780 Reading Rd, Cincinnati, OH 45241

Knee Scooters: Rental Only, can bill Ins if In-Network, \$79.95/month w/ steering, \$59.95/month w/out steering

*\*To bill insurance will need a Rx and clinical dication*

**Kunkle Medical**

513-231-1943 7717 Beechmont Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45255

Knee Scooters: Rental Only Self Pay \$85/month

**Bernens Pharmacy**

513-471-7575 5053 Glenway Ave, Cincinnati, OH 45238

Knee Scooters: Rental Only, can bill some insurances or do Self Pay \$75/month