

BATHROOM SAFETY

Looking after your personal hygiene is an important part of maintaining your self-esteem and independence, but the loss of fine motor skills and balance that comes with Parkinson's disease (PD) can make this difficult. Simple tasks, such as brushing your teeth, bathing and using the toilet, can become a challenge.

People with PD are at a greater risk of falling, and your bathroom can be a hazardous place. With just a few adjustments and alterations your bathroom can be made safer, allowing you to avoid frustrations in caring for yourself. Here are a few suggestions:

- The combination of soap, water, and floor surfaces creates a dangerous situation. Place bath mats in front of your sink and toilet as well as your tub/shower. You may also consider installing wall-to-wall carpeting in the bathroom.
- Install grab bars for the toilet, bath, and shower. Never use towel racks for support.
- Use non-slip mats in the shower and tub. Look for options with suction cups.
- Put a chair in the shower, or a bath board for the bath. Use a hand-held shower head so that you may sit while showering.
- Never try to get out of a wet, empty bathtub – they are slippery and dangerous. Instead, get out when the tub is full, so the water can help keep you buoyant. Be sure to step out onto a bath mat.
- Sit down to dry yourself, or dry off in a terry robe.
- Many people with PD have difficulty with visual contrast. Install carpet that is a different colour from the floor and the fittings. Use colour-contrasting towels, soap, and toothbrushes so that they are easily visible.
- Install a night light in the bathroom, and in the hallway leading to it.
- Try to bathe during your medication on-time. If necessary, rest after bathing and dressing.

Do not put off evaluating the safety of your bathroom. Early assessment and adaptation can:

- Minimize your risk of slipping, falling, and injury in the bathroom
- Extend your ability to manage your own personal care and hygiene
- Allow you to stay in your home longer

Contact Parkinson Society BC for information about an in-home safety and mobility assessment through your local health unit. An Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist can provide you with information about ways to make your bathroom safer.

Additional Resources

Assistive Devices, Home Adaptations, and Funding Helpsheet | bit.ly/pdhomeadaptation

In-Home Safety Check Helpsheet | bit.ly/pdhomesafetycheck