



PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

About Durable Medical Equipment: Shower and Bathtub Accessories

This information explains different types of durable medical equipment for your shower or bathtub. It also explains where to buy this equipment, and how to use it in your shower or bathtub.

Handheld Shower Heads

A handheld shower head is a removable shower head that you can hold (see Figure 1). It can be useful for people who can't stand up to shower or who need help with showering.

Handheld shower heads:

- Make it easier to shower while sitting down.
- Make it easier to shower with help from a caregiver.
- Give more control over the water direction and flow.
- Can be used to avoid getting certain body areas wet. This includes an incision (surgical cut) site or a cast.



Figure 1. Handheld shower head

A handheld shower head can lower your risk of falling. You can get into the dry shower or bathtub, then turn on the water once you're inside.

How To Use a Handheld Shower Head

Usually, a handheld shower head can attach to the shower pipe you already have. To install it, remove your current shower head and replace it with the handheld shower head. Follow the directions that come with the handheld shower head.

Where To Buy a Handheld Shower Head

You can buy a handheld shower head at the following places:

- Medical supply stores.
- Medical supply websites.
- Retail drug stores (such as Walgreens or CVS).
- Supercenters (such as Wal-Mart).
- Home supply stores (such as Lowe's or Home Depot).
- Online retailers (such as Amazon).

Insurance plans don't usually cover handheld shower heads. Check with your insurer to see if it will be covered under your plan before buying one.

Shower Chairs

A shower chair is a metal or plastic chair that's used in the shower. The chairs usually have rubber or suction cups on the bottom of the legs. This stops them from sliding.

A shower chair lets people who can't stand for a long time sit down while showering. Not all shower chairs fit in smaller showers or tubs. It's important to measure your bathtub or shower before buying a shower chair.

There are 3 common kinds of shower chairs:

- Shower chairs with arms and a back (see Figure 2)
- Shower chairs with a back (see Figure 3)
- Shower chairs without backs or arms (see Figure 4)



Figure 2. Shower chair with arms and back



Figure 3. Shower chair with back



Figure 4. Shower chair without back or arm

How To Use a Shower Chair

A shower chair does not need to be installed. To use it, place it in the shower. If it has suction cups, make sure they stick to the shower floor before you use the chair.

Transfer Tub Benches

A transfer tub bench is a seat used to help you move in and out of your shower or bathtub. It's helpful for people who may have trouble lifting their legs to step over the tub. The bench has rubber caps or suction cups at the bottom of each leg (see Figure 5). They keep the bench from moving in the tub to help you move safely and easily.



How To Use a Transfer Tub Bench

Put 2 legs of your transfer tub bench inside the tub. Put the other 2 legs of the bench outside the tub (see Figure 6). Place the bench so that a little more than half of it is in the tub. Check to see that each leg is held in place so that your bench does not slide. Be sure to leave enough space in front of the bench for your legs.

Figure 5. Transfer tub bench

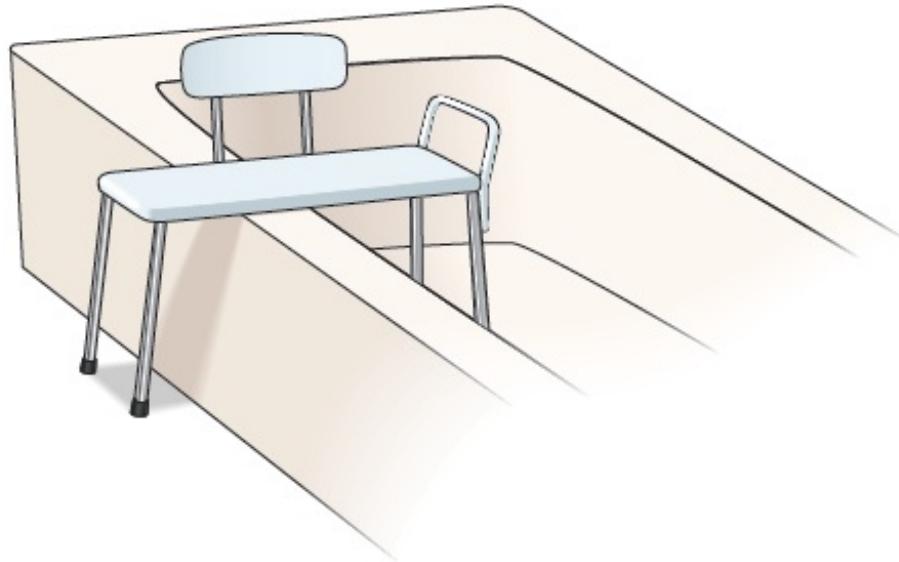


Figure 6. Transfer tub bench in tub

You can sit on your bench and lift your legs in and out of the tub. You do not have to step over.

Transfer tub benches can't be used with showers that have glass doors. You can take the glass doors off of your shower. Replace them with curtains so that you can use a tub bench. The doors can be put on again later, if needed.

Where To Buy Shower and Bathtub Accessories

You can buy a handheld shower head, shower chair, or transfer tub bench at the following places:

- Medical supply stores.
- Medical supply websites.
- Retail drug stores, such as Walgreens or CVS.
- Supercenters, such as Wal-Mart.
- Home supply stores, such as Lowe's or Home Depot.
- Online retailers, such as Amazon.

Insurance plans often don't cover these accessories. They may cover shower chairs and transfer tub benches with a prescription. Check with your insurer to find out what your plan covers before buying the accessories you need. If your plan covers it, ask your healthcare provider for a prescription for one. Follow your insurer's instructions for getting coverage.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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