About Durable Medical Equipment: Shower and Bathtub Accessories

This information explains different types of durable medical equipment for your shower or bathtub. It will also explain how to use and where to buy durable medical equipment to use 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 (for example, an incision (surgical cut) site or a cast).

A handheld shower head is also useful because it’s safer. It makes it easier to get into the shower while it’s still dry. You can turn on the water once you’re safely in to warm up the water, which lowers your risk of falling.

**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 you choose for your bathroom.

**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 so it’s best to check with your insurance provider 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 to keep them from sliding.

A shower chair can be useful for people who can’t stand for a long time because it allows you to sit down while showering. This makes showering easier and safer. But not all shower chairs fit in smaller showers or tubs, so 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)
How to use a shower chair

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

Where to buy a shower chair

You can buy a shower chair 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 shower chairs, so it’s best to check with your insurance provider to find out what your plan
covers. If your insurance provider covers it, ask your doctor for a prescription for one. Then you can submit the prescription from your doctor after you buy the shower chair.

**Transfer Tub Benches**

A transfer tub bench is a seat used to help you move in and out of your shower or bathtub safely and easily (see Figure 5). 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 to keep it from moving in the tub.

**How to use a transfer tub bench**

To use your transfer tub bench, put it in the tub so that 2 legs go inside the tub and 2 legs stay 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 doesn’t slide. Be sure to leave enough space in front of the bench for your legs.
Once your bench is in place, you can sit on it and lift your legs in or out of the tub without having to step over.

Transfer tub benches can’t be used with showers that have glass doors. If you have a shower like this, you can take the glass doors off of your shower and 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 a transfer tub bench**

You can buy a transfer tub bench at the following places:

- Medical supply stores
- Supercenters (such as Wal-Mart)
- Home improvement supply stores (such as Home Depot)
- Online retailers (such as Amazon)

Insurance plans don’t usually cover transfer tub benches, so it’s
best to check with your insurance provider to find out what your plan covers. If your insurance provider covers it, ask your doctor for a prescription for a transfer tub bench. Then you can submit the prescription from your doctor after you buy it.

If you have any questions, contact a member of your healthcare team directly. If you're a patient at MSK and you need to reach a provider after 5:00 PM, during the weekend, or on a holiday, call 212-639-2000.

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

About Durable Medical Equipment: Shower and Bathtub Accessories - Last updated on January 18, 2019
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