

Assistive Devices for Bathing, Dressing, Eating, Grooming, Toileting, Walking

What are assistive devices?

Assistive devices are tools that help you do everyday tasks and activities more easily and safely. They are used for many types of activities of daily living (ADLs), including:

- Bathing
- Dressing
- Eating
- Grooming
- Using the toilet
- Walking
- Getting in and out of bed or chairs
- Seeing
- Communicating
- Hearing
- Taking the correct medicines at the correct time

Some examples of assistive devices are:

- Bath chairs or grab bars in the shower and around the toilet
- Tools to help reach and pick up objects, put on socks, or button clothing
- Knives, forks, and spoons with large or custom-shaped handles
- Plates with tall sides to prevent food from being pushed off
- Tools that can be used with one hand
- Braces, walkers, and canes
- Wheelchairs and scooters
- Eyeglasses or magnifying glass
- Large-print books or magnifiers
- Audiobooks
- Voice activated computers and modified keyboards
- Hearing aides
- Medication organizers
- Artificial limbs

How do I know if I need an assistive device?

If you think you could benefit from using an assistive device, doctors, physical and occupational therapists, and other healthcare providers can help you decide what might help you. Tell them what daily activities are hard for you. Find out what is available to meet your needs.

Sometimes, people are embarrassed to use assistive devices. Once they are comfortable with them, they realize that the device allows them to overcome physical barriers and live more comfortably with a disability.

How can I get assistive devices?

Assistive devices may be sold or rented at pharmacies or medical supply stores, supplied by an agency providing home care, or given to you when you leave the hospital.

Canes and walkers will be adjusted to the right height for you. Usually this is done by a physical therapist. Braces and artificial limbs need to be specially made to fit you. Specialists fit and make these devices after your healthcare provider or therapist recommends them. Some devices, such as grooming and personal-care aids do not need special fitting.

Some devices are very expensive. Be sure to check with your health plan so you will know how much it may cost to get an assistive device.

How do I learn how to use them?

A therapist can show you how to use a device and watch you to make sure you use it correctly.

If you have a custom-made device, like a leg brace, you will be taught how to put it on and use it so that it fits properly and is comfortable for you.

If you need an assistive device for getting around, like a wheelchair, it may take some practice for you to learn how to use it safely.

An assistive device is most helpful when:

- You understand how to use it and it is easy to use.
- It fits properly and does not cause discomfort.

Assistive devices may need to be adjusted several times as you learn to use them. If you are having trouble using a device, you can get more training from your healthcare provider or therapist.

You can get more information from:

- Assistive Devices, U.S. National Library of Medicine
<http://www.nlm.nih.gov/medlineplus/assistivedevices.html>
- Devices and Aids, Arthritis Foundation
www.arthritistoday.org

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