

Health Care Advice

ASSISTIVE DEVICES AND EQUIPMENT

Bathroom Equipment

This item is primarily used for workers who are severely impaired. Workers are considered severely impaired if their disabilities/impairments are:

- permanent and have been rated for either permanent disability (PD) benefits totaling at least 100%, or non-economic loss (NEL) benefits totaling at least 60%, or
- likely to be permanent in the opinion of a WSIB medical consultant, and are likely to meet one of the criteria above (Operational Policy 17-06-02).

Note: Bathroom safety equipment, which is not permanent in nature, may be required temporarily due to the nature of the work-related injury. It is often rented in these situations.

Bathroom Safety Devices

Consider bathroom safety devices for workers who have a work-related injury/disease resulting in difficulty with:

- transfers into and out of the bathtub and/or shower stall,
- transfers on/off the toilet, or
- standing during a shower.

Difficulties may be related to amputations, paralysis, cognitive issues, loss of balance, reduced range of motion.

Benefits of bathroom safety devices may include

- reduction of falls and further injury,
- reduced risk of secondary health issues, such as skin breakdown and infection, and/or
- elimination of need for home modifications.

Issues to Consider

Information regarding the worker's safety in the bathroom should be provided by a health professional. This will determine what devices are most appropriate for the worker and his/her environment.

If bathroom devices are installed, a follow-up visit by the health professional is recommended. This will ensure that the devices are being used safely by the worker.

If it is anticipated that the worker's condition will change, it is important to determine whether rental of devices is more cost-effective than purchase.

Home modifications may be required if bathroom safety devices (e.g., grab bars, toilet devices, bath bench) cannot safely meet the worker's needs. Please contact the **Serious Injury Program** if further information is required regarding bathroom modifications.

Grab Bars

Grab bars help maintain a worker's balance and provide support for:

- getting into or out of a bathtub/shower, or
- transferring on and off a toilet.

A worker requires good upper body function to hold onto a grab bar while moving or standing. It is important to have a health professional assist in determining the appropriate size, type and positioning of grab bar(s) for the worker.

NOTICE: This document is intended to assist WSIB decision-makers in reaching consistent decisions in similar fact situations and to supplement applicable WSIB policies and guidelines as set out in the Operational Policy Manual (OPM). This document is **not a policy** and in the event of a conflict between this document and an OPM policy or guideline, the decision-maker will rely on the latter.

www.wsib.on.ca

Types

Permanent

The grab bar is affixed to the wall of the bathtub, shower, or toilet area. Professional installation by a vendor is needed to ensure that it will safely support the worker. If a worker is renting the home, it is important to receive written authorization from the landlord prior to installing this device.

Removable

Clamp-on grab bars are installed on the edge of the bathtub and may be removed as needed without damaging the tub.

Bathtub and Shower Devices

These devices are placed inside a bathtub or shower stall to allow a worker to sit while bathing.

Bath Benches and Seats

Features of bath benches and seats may include: backrest, arms, padding, adjustable height, or cutouts to reach perineal area. Bath benches and bath seats typically have rubber tips on the legs to prevent them from slipping.

Transfer Benches

A transfer bench is appropriate for workers who have difficulty stepping into the bathtub and standing while showering. This bench sits mostly in the tub, and there is also a portion which extends outside of the tub. A worker can sit on the edge of the bench and slide across it into the tub. They must be able to lift their legs over the edge of the tub while seated, or have a caregiver available to provide assistance.

Transfer Boards

A transfer or bath board fits across the bathtub to allow the worker to slide across it to sit while bathing/showering. A worker must have

good sitting balance to safely use this device as there is no back and arms on the transfer board.

Shower Commodes

A shower commode has wheels, may or may not be padded, and is appropriate for a wheel-in shower. It is used with workers who are unable to walk safely and need to sit while showering. A caregiver may need to push the commode into the shower, or the worker (if physically able) may do this independently using a self-propelled commode.

Some shower commodes are also equipped for toileting.

Bath Lifts

A bath lift sits inside the bathtub. It raises and lowers a seat to allow a worker to get into a bath. It is powered by a battery. These devices may have recline and/or postural support.

Bath lifts may be appropriate for workers who cannot transfer into a bathtub without assistance, who need additional postural support for bathing, and/or find warm water reduces their pain and/or spasticity.

Toilet Devices

These devices are appropriate for individuals who have difficulty rising from a toilet seat.

Raised toilet devices increase the height of the toilet, reducing the distance between a standing and a sitting position. Grab bars or a frame around the toilet provide stability for a worker when transferring on/off a toilet.

There are a variety of toilet devices. A health professional can assist in determining which device is most appropriate for a worker and his/her environment.

Toilet Safety Frame

A toilet safety frame is a metal frame that fits around a toilet. It provides rails on either side that a worker can use for support when getting on or off the toilet.

Raised Toilet Seat

Raised toilet seats are made of plastic and sit or are clamped on top of the toilet seat or rim. They may have armrests, and may or may not be padded. Raised toilet seats may be difficult to clean, and others using the same bathroom may not want to use this seat. If the need for a raised surface is permanent, the use of a raised toilet or toilet platform may also be considered.

Raised Toilet

A worker who has a long-term need for a raised toilet surface may benefit from a higher toilet rather than a standard height one. If a worker is renting the home, it is important to receive written authorization from the landlord prior to installing this device.

Toilet Riser/Platform

A platform or riser can be placed under a standard height toilet to raise the height of the sitting surface. As indicated above, written authorization from the landlord should be received if the worker is renting the home.

Commodes

The commode is a portable toilet that may be either stationary or wheeled. A **stationary commode** has a bucket attached to it. It is usually placed at the bedside or next to a chair for workers who are unable to access the bathroom due to home accessibility or timing issues.

Alternatively, the stationary commode may sit over a regular toilet.

Wheeled commodes may be used over top of a regular toilet and may also serve a dual purpose as a shower commode (allows worker to sit for bathing in a wheel-in shower). A wheeled commode may allow the worker to be transported from one location to another within the home (e.g., from bedroom to bathroom). A caregiver may need to push the worker on the wheeled commode or it may be self-propelled.

Some workers, particularly those with spinal cord injuries, may be on a commode for a long period of time during their bladder and bowel routine. Padding of commodes may be required to decrease the risk of skin breakdown and to promote their safety and comfort. In such instances, a custom commode may be required.

Health Services

August 31, 2007