



Hints for Activities of Daily Living (ADLs) for Persons with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis

The following ideas may ease the difficulties you experience with caring for yourself and help to keep you safe as your symptoms progress with ALS. They can help you to maintain your independence or assist your caregiver with these tasks.

BATHING/TOILETING/GROOMING:

- 1) Use a non-skid mat or strips in the bottom of your tub/shower. This will help to prevent falls.
- 2) Use bathroom safety equipment such as a shower chair/bench, safety grab bars, toilet safety frames, raised toilet seat or 3-in-1 commode. Your occupational therapist can assist you in determining what equipment is most appropriate for you to use at home.
- 3) **NEVER USE TOWEL RACKS TO SUPPORT** you in the bathroom. They can easily come off the wall and cause you to fall. If you decide to use proper bathroom safety grab bars, please install them into the STUDS of the wall. You can do this yourself or through a general contractor.
- 4) Use an electric razor to avoid cutting yourself while shaving; it also saves your energy. The larger handle may be easier to hold onto as well.
- 5) Place cylindrical foam on toothbrushes, combs, or hairbrushes. This gives you a larger surface to hold to. You can purchase the foam at your local hardware store. The center hole should be ¼” to 5/8” depending on the size of the item you want to place in it.
- 6) Use liquid soap instead of bar soap.
- 7) Use an electric toothbrush. Be sure to choose one that is lightweight as well as having a larger handle. Some people find it helpful to use a pediatric electric toothbrush.
- 8) Use a toothpaste pump instead of a tube.
- 9) Sit to shave or brush your teeth and rest your elbows on the countertop or sink. This conserves your energy as well as gives support to your arm so you do not have to hold it up.
- 10) Use a wash mitten or large sponge rather than a regular wash cloth. You can make a wash mitten yourself by folding 2 sides of a cloth together and sewing 2 of the 3 open sides.

DRESSING:

- 1) If dressing has become a problem, you may want to purchase clothes that are a size or two larger. This will help you and your caregiver put them on easier. Choose clothes that have elastic waistbands, Velcro closures, and larger buttons. You can change your existing clothes to Velcro closures by purchasing Velcro strips from a fabric store and sewing them onto your clothes.
- 2) Place a key ring or fishing line on zippers.
- 3) With the assistance of your OT, you may be able to use assistive devices such as a button aide, elastic shoelaces, or a long handled shoehorn.
- 4) If one side of your body is weaker, dress that side first.



- 5) Sit down to dress and bathe. This is safer and helps to conserve your energy.

SELF-FEEDING:

- 1) Use cylindrical foam on eating utensils to build up the handles.
- 2) If you need angled silverware, buy a cheap set from a Dollar Store or Salvation Army store and bend it yourself.
- 3) Use a lightweight travel coffee mug with a big handle or a cup with a lid and long straw for drinking.
- 4) Place a rubber mat under your plate to help prevent it from sliding away. You may need to purchase a scoop plate or plate guard with the assistance of your OT.

GENERAL SAFETY:

- 1) Keep hallways, stairwells, and open areas free of clutter on the floor. This will help reduce tripping and falls.
- 2) Remove throw rugs from floors in kitchens, bathrooms, and hallways, as they are easy to trip over. Or make sure they have non-slip matting underneath them.
- 3) If you get up to the bathroom during the night, turn on a light, not just a night light. You need a well-lit path to avoid falls.
- 4) Carry your cell phone on your person any time that you are home alone in case you fall or are unable to get to the phone to call for help.
- 5) You may want to look into getting an emergency call button, which you wear, in case you cannot get to a phone to call for help.
- 6) Use the seat of your Rollator to safely transport items around your home, especially in the kitchen when carrying bowls and plates to the table.

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