

Getting Down To and Up From the Floor Safely

Why is this an important skill?

- For Function: Getting on the floor to play with kids or grandkids, cleaning toilets, retrieving the \$20 bill you dropped, gardening, doing exercises
- For Safety and Empowerment:
 - If you think you will fall or are afraid of falling, you are more likely to fall.
 - Knowing how to get up may decrease the fear associated with falling; which in turn may reduce your risk for falling.
 - Another fall may occur in the process of getting up if you do not know how to get up safely.
- It is a great exercise!
 - Once you are able to get off the floor you have to **KEEP PRACTICING**.
 - Practice getting down/up regularly (several times per week or even daily) to maintain the mobility and strength to perform this task, and to recall the steps.
- Even if you are not physically able to get down/up on your own, it is important to know what you need help with, and how to tell someone how to help and how not to help.

Note: Every person's strategy is different, so it is important to consult your Therapist to determine the safest and best way for you to get off of the floor. If you are injured or in doubt, call 9-1-1.

Options:

- Use a stable support (couch, bed, coffee table)
- Use a less stable support (dining room chair)
- With no support (in the middle of the room, out in the yard)
- With or without a caregiver assisting
- Perform the transition from standing <> kneel on the floor, using the floor or surfaces for support as needed. Or break up the transition by sitting on surfaces to allow you to move in smaller increments.

Tools that may help:

- Knee pads – Foam knee pads from the hardware store are a good, cheap option to protect your knees and increase comfort during the transition. We suggest purchasing several pairs so you can have some at home, some in the car and some in your travel bag when you go out.
- Gait Belt or Clothing Belt – A belt can be useful for a caregiver to assist, especially as an alternative to pulling on an affected/weak arm.
- If you are wearing a brace, consider that it may be easier to move if you take it off. Weigh this against the benefit of the support that the brace provides.

- Wear a Life Alert button to allow you to call for help, wear an Apple Watch or other fall sensing tool that will alert EMS or a family member in the event of a fall, and/or keep your cell phone with you at all times so that you can use it to call for help.
- Having a step stool or other low surface available in your home may help to break up the “trip” from the floor to standing. You can move from the floor to sitting on the stool and then scoot to a higher surface, or stand from the stool rather than the floor.

Strategies for a safe transition down to the floor:



Move through a ½ kneeling position (one leg forward/one knee on the floor) by using a support surface on one side, one foot forward and one leg back.

- This creates a “tripod” position where your weight is in the middle of three points of contact.
- Position your front leg first, then use the surface for support while you take a big step back with the back leg.
- The bigger the stagger between your feet, the more stable you will feel during the transition. If you only take a small step back, you will start to feel “crunched” and more unstable as you near the floor.



Transition your front knee to the floor then reach to the floor with one hand then the other. Once you are on hands and knees, you can adjust your position as needed to give you room to move. Carefully lower to side-sitting on one side.



If it is difficult to move your leg back to kneel on the floor with both legs, consider moving your body around your leg. For example, if you are not able to move your front leg back in order to place your knee on the floor, you may be able to “pivot” around until you are able to sit on the floor.

Getting up from the floor:



Start on one side. Push with your arms and “crunch” your upper body forward and up to come up on a diagonal onto your elbow. Push up to your hands and spread them apart to create a wide base. Lift your hips up and over into a hands and knees position by pushing your bottom knee into the floor and twisting/lifting your hips. Adjust your weight and spread your knees apart in a wide base. This is a good position to move if you need to get closer to your support surface. Lift your trunk into a tall kneeling position using your hand on the support surface as needed. Bring one leg forward into ½ kneeling. Shift your weight forward and push up using both legs to propel and your hands for balance/support. Step your back foot forward and stand up.

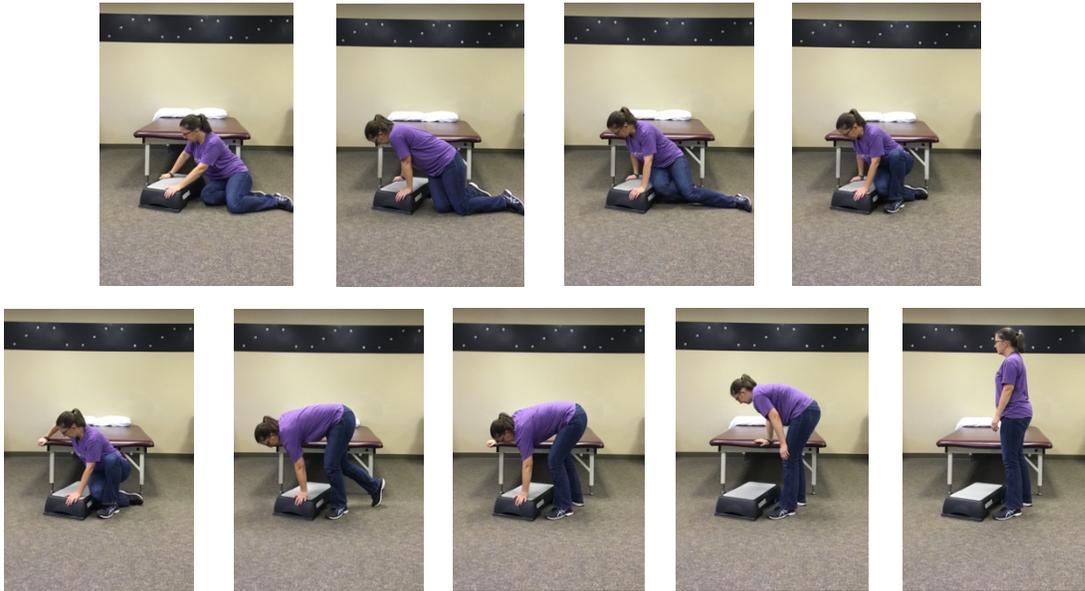


You also have the option to transition to sitting on the support surface, rather than standing all of the way up. The technique is the same as above, but when your hips are just above the surface, pivot and sit down.

Other options for transitioning to the floor:



While it is beneficial to have the skill to transition all the way from stand<>floor, you CAN break up the trip by sitting on a surface and moving on a diagonal to a 1/2 kneeling position on the floor going down or reversing this strategy and “boosting” a hip onto a surface from a 1/2 kneeling position when getting up from the floor.



Another option is to push through your arms and legs and boost backward or sideways up to a low surface. Reset your foot or feet under you and push through your legs and arms to boost up to the next surface, or to stand all the way up.

Using a Garden Kneeler outside:



The garden kneeler is a useful tool for getting down to and up from the ground while outside. It can be used with the pad close to the ground for kneeling or turn it over with the pad at the top for a seat. In either case, you can use the “arm rests” on the kneeler or the top of the seat as a surface to assist your transition. This tool is lightweight so a caregiver can easily bring the tool to you if needed, outside or inside. This tool is available at hardware stores, garden centers, WalMart and Amazon.



“Hook” both toes under and push up thru both arms and both legs at the same time.



Or, bring one leg forward to stand up via 1/2 kneeling.



If you sit on the top, stand up just as you would from a chair.

If you do fall:

- Do not hurry to get up (unless your house is on fire or you are in the middle of the street, etc.). Rest, breathe and let your heart rate normalize. Check in with your body, make sure that you are not hurt before attempting to get up.
- Make a plan. Determine what surfaces you will use for support and how you need to move to get yourself into the right position. Taking the time to formulate a plan will save you a lot of energy!
- Call someone if you need help!
- 9-1-1 is always an option if strategies do not work.

Possible exercises to improve strength, flexibility, coordination and skill for stand<>floor transfers:

Side-lying to elbow prop



Lie on your bed on one side. Exhale and roll/“crunch” in a forward and up diagonal to come up onto your elbow. Try this movement with your arm in various positions to determine what angle works best for you. You will need both abdominal engagement and shoulder strength to push up onto your elbow. Lower back to your pillow and repeat 10 times.

Elbow prop to side-sitting



Plant your hands on the bed and push thru your arms to extend your elbows and come up. Spread your hands, sliding your hand closer to your hip to achieve a more comfortable and relaxed position. To go down, slide the hand away from your hip and gently lower down onto your elbow. This activity demands shoulder and triceps strength. Repeat 10 times.

Side Planks to help with transition to hands and knees



Side sit on your hip with your hands on the bed and your top leg resting on your bottom leg. Using your hand and bottom knee as pivot points, lean forward and push down into your hands and knee and lift your hip off the mat. Hold for 1-3 seconds, then slowly lower. Repeat 10 times.

Step-backs to lunge at counter



Stand next to a counter. Adjust the foot furthest from the counter forward and take a large step backward with the leg closest to the counter. Bend both knees and lower toward the floor, then push up through both legs and step forward to return to standing. Repeat, lowering closer to the floor as you gain strength. Repeat 10 times.



You may also place a surface under your back knee to land on and push off of. As you get stronger, use a smaller surface.

Sit to stand from low surfaces



Allow your head to come forward (“nose over toes”) and you bend your hips and knees and use your legs to lower down gently to the surface. Lean forward (“nose over toes”), push off the surface then unfold and stand up. Using your hands is optional for balance/safety. Work toward building enough leg strength and balance to perform without the need for your hands. As you get stronger, use a lower surface to increase the challenge. Repeat 10 times.