

# Toileting and ALS

When using the toilet becomes more challenging, there are a number of strategies and devices that can help you relieve yourself while staying safe, preserving privacy, and remaining more independent. The occupational therapist (OT) or physical therapist (PT) at your ALS clinic or home health agency should be able to make recommendations on what will work best for you.



## Using the Toilet Independently

If you are starting to have trouble getting on and off the toilet by yourself, there are strategies and assistive devices that may help.

For starters, make sure your toilet is high enough that your hips are above your knees. This will give you a mechanical advantage that will help you stand up more easily while using less energy.

You can raise the height of your existing toilet seat by adding a hinged raised toilet seat or toilet seat riser between the bowl and seat, installing a toilevator under the base of your toilet, or placing a commode chair over your toilet.

If you have arm strength, you can place a toilet safety frame around your toilet or add a raised toilet seat with handles. Other options include installing permanent grab bars on the walls near your toilet or adding a transfer pole that runs from floor to ceiling. If you are using a walker or rollator, you should bring it inside the bathroom with you and keep it within reach of the toilet.

A bidet toilet seat can be helpful if you are having difficulty wiping. You can replace your toilet seat with a toilet seat bidet with an adjustable water spray. Bidet seats are widely available and easy to install. They do require an electrical outlet and plumbing source.

## Using the Toilet with Caregiver Assistance

If you need the assistance of a caregiver to get on and off the toilet, many of the devices listed in the previous section should still be helpful. Having a higher toilet seat and something to grab onto can make transfers easier. Another option would be to first transfer to a shower commode chair, which a caregiver can roll into the bathroom and over the toilet. If your patient (Hoyer) lift can fit into the bathroom and over the toilet, you can use the toilet as long as you are placed in a divided-leg sling with your lower body exposed.

## Portable Toileting Options

If you are unable to make it to the toilet, there are other ways that you can relieve yourself. A bedside commode is a portable toilet with a bucket that can be placed near your bed. There are also portable urinal options for men and women as well as condom-catheters for men and external catheters for women. Adult diapers and bedpans are other options.

Toileting devices are not usually covered by insurance. However, you can ask your ALS clinic or local ALS Network care manager if they have any that you can borrow. You can also visit the ALS Equipment Guide ([www.youralsguide.com/als-equipment-guide](http://www.youralsguide.com/als-equipment-guide)) to learn more and purchase devices directly.

## Are your bathroom and toilet accessible?

The bathroom is usually the most challenging room to navigate for people living with ALS. Bathroom doorways are often narrower than other doorways in the house, which can prevent walkers and rolling shower commode chairs from entering. And once inside the bathroom, there may be little room for transfers or assistive devices around the toilet.

You may be able to make simple changes like widening your doorway a few inches with offset hinges, or clearing furniture or shelving, but if you need to make your bathroom bigger, safer, or more accessible, you will need to learn about renovation options such as creating a barrier-free roll-in shower, installing a floating counter and sink for wheelchair accessibility, and adding more square footage if possible. Adding smooth, non-slip flooring can also improve safety and accessibility.

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