



Caregiver Guide for Daily Care

Tips and Tools for Mobility, Transfers & Home Safety

Caring for someone with Parkinson’s disease often means becoming quietly skilled at the everyday moments—helping with movement, navigating transfers, and creating a home environment that supports safety without sacrificing dignity. These daily tasks may seem small, but they play a powerful role in preserving independence, confidence, and quality of life for both the individual with Parkinson’s and the care partner.

This guide offers practical tools, clinical insight, and compassionate perspective to help you approach daily care with greater confidence and less physical strain.

Supporting Safe Movement & Mobility

Movement challenges in Parkinson’s—such as stiffness, slowed motion, balance changes, and freezing—can fluctuate throughout the day. Mobility support is not about doing things *for* someone but rather creating the conditions that allow them to move as independently and safely as possible.

Important mobility tips for caregivers:

- Encourage upright posture and slow, intentional movements
- Use verbal cues such as “big steps” or “heel first”
- Allow extra time—rushing increases fall risk
- Ensure proper footwear with non-slip soles
- Align mobility activities with optimal medication “on” times

When assisting with walking, stand slightly to the side and behind rather than directly in front. This position allows you to provide support without pulling or steering, which can disrupt balance. Simple rhythmic cues—counting steps aloud, gentle music, or even tapping—can help overcome freezing and promote smoother movement.

Whenever possible, let the person initiate movement. Even small efforts maintain strength, coordination, and confidence. Your role is to steady, cue, and protect—not to replace their ability.

Transfers: Bed, Chair, Bathroom & Car

Transfers are one of the most physically demanding—and highest-risk—activities for caregivers. Learning proper techniques protects *both* of you from injury.

Key transfer safety principles:

- Always move nose over toes before standing
- Keep feet shoulder-width apart for stability
- Avoid lifting—use momentum and weight-shifting
- Lock wheelchair brakes and remove footrests
- Use gait belts when trained and available

Transfers work best when broken into clear steps. Encourage scooting to the edge of the surface first, then leaning forward before standing. Avoid pulling on arms or shoulders; instead, guide from the trunk or hips if support is needed.

In bathrooms and cars, plan transfers ahead of time. Position seats at equal heights when possible and remove obstacles before beginning. A calm, unrushed environment reduces muscle rigidity and anxiety, making transfers smoother and safer.

If transfers are becoming consistently difficult or unsafe, this is a strong signal to request a physical or occupational therapy evaluation. Adaptive equipment and technique adjustments can dramatically reduce strain.

Creating a Safer Home Environment

Home safety is one of the most effective fall-prevention strategies—and many improvements are simple and affordable.

High-impact home safety tips:

- Remove throw rugs and clutter from walkways

- Install grab bars in bathrooms (not towel racks)
- Ensure bright, even lighting—especially at night
- Use chairs with armrests and firm seats
- Keep frequently used items within easy reach

Think of the home as an extension of care. Clear walking paths reduce visual overload and tripping hazards. Contrasting colors on floors, steps, or furniture edges can improve depth perception. In bathrooms, non-slip mats and raised toilet seats add immediate stability.

Nighttime deserves special attention. Motion-sensor lights, bedside lamps, and clear routes to the bathroom can prevent falls during low-alert moments. Small changes can dramatically improve confidence and reduce fear—especially for individuals who limit movement due to fall concerns.

Protecting the Caregiver's Body

Caregiving is physical work. Ignoring your own body mechanics increases the risk of chronic pain and injury.

Caregiver self-protection reminders:

- Bend at the knees, not the waist
- Keep movements close to your body
- Avoid twisting while supporting weight
- Take breaks and rotate tasks when possible
- Ask for help early—before strain builds

Pain is not a requirement of good caregiving. If you notice back pain, shoulder strain, or fatigue, it's a sign that adjustments are needed—not that you're doing something wrong. Learning proper techniques and using assistive devices preserves your ability to care long-term.

Caregivers who protect their own health are better able to provide consistent, compassionate support.

When to Seek Extra Support

Daily care needs change over time. Reaching out for additional support is a sign of attentiveness—not failure.

Consider professional guidance if:

- Falls or near-falls are increasing
- Transfers require significant physical effort
- Fear of movement limits daily activity
- You feel physically or emotionally overwhelmed

Physical and occupational therapists can assess mobility, recommend equipment, and train caregivers in safe techniques tailored to your home and routines.

A Final Thought for Care Partners

Daily care is not about perfection, it's about presence, patience, and partnership. The small adjustments you make each day help preserve dignity, reduce risk, and support independence longer than you may realize. You are not expected to know everything at once, and you are not meant to do this alone.

Support, education, and guidance are always available—and your role matters more than you know.

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