

# Managing Changes in Function After Illness or Injury

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Adapted from Clear Cane Chronicles: Shaping the Future of Healthcare Through Person-Centered Care

Better healthcare depends on informed questions, engaged communities, and decisions that reflect people's needs.

## Example of How Illness or Injury May Change Everyday Life

This guide helps you manage changes in function by understanding recovery, staying safe, planning for everyday life, and finding helpful resources.

### Movement & Senses

- Walking or balance
- Vision or hearing
- Using hands or arms
- Strength or endurance

### Communication & Thinking

- Speaking or understanding
- Thinking or memory
- Reading or writing
- Learning or concentrating

### Daily Living

- Dressing or bathing
- Shopping or cooking
- Driving or travelling
- Caregiving or working

## Recognizing Changes in Function

- Illness or injury may change how you approach everyday life.
- Changes in function may be temporary, permanent, progressive, or fluctuate over time.
- The impact of changes in function varies from person to person and may change over time.

## Planning for Everyday Life

- Recognize that the support in healthcare settings may differ from what is available at home.
- Work with your healthcare team to plan for how changes in function may affect work, school, driving, caregiving, recreation, relationships, and other daily activities.
- Explore strategies, equipment, technology, or services that may help you continue important activities safely and independently.
- If considering assisted living or another residential care setting, compare quality of care, staffing, cleanliness, safety, services, and activities before making a decision.

## Staying Safe

- Ask which activities you can safely do on your own and which may require assistance.
- Consider if equipment, technology, accommodations, or support may reduce your risk of injury.
- Reassess your abilities as your recovery or condition changes.
- Discuss safety concerns with your healthcare team and support network.

## Working with Your Support Team

- Develop a plan that reflects both your needs and the abilities of your family, friends, caregivers, or other people supporting you.
- Communicate openly about concerns, changing needs, and what is working and is not working.
- Be open to adjusting how support is provided as your needs and circumstances change.

## Understanding Disability

- Not everyone with changes in function identifies as having a disability, and not all disabilities are visible.
- Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), a disability is a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities.
- Disability is about how changes in function affect everyday life, not simply a medical diagnosis.
- People with disabilities may be eligible for reasonable accommodations, supports, and legal protections.

## Questions to Ask the Healthcare Team

Consider the questions that may be helpful to your situation.

- What changes in function are expected to improve? What remains uncertain?
- How will my progress be measured?
- When should my treatment plan be reassessed?
- Do you have plain-language resources that explain my condition and treatment?
- Which activities can I safely do on my own?
- Which activities may require assistance or a different approach?
- What equipment, technology, or accommodations might help?
- What services, supports, or benefits might help me participate in everyday life?
- What support is available for my family or caregivers?

## Finding Support

### Services & Programs

- Rehabilitation services
- Home health or personal care
- Centers for Independent Living
- Home- and community-based services
- State Vocational Rehabilitation
- Peer support groups

### Tools & Resources

- Durable medical equipment
- Assistive technology
- Healthcare apps

- Workplace or school accommodations
- Accessible transportation and disability parking
- Insurance benefits

## **Closing**

Healthcare for people who live in the real world, not in a medical chart.  
Your circumstances may change, but you are still you.

## **Publication Information**

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This guide reflects the U.S. healthcare system. It is a living document that continues to evolve.