

# Walkers

## What are the types of walkers?

A walker can help you walk if you have leg problems or balance problems, or if you are generally weak. A walker can support up to half of your body weight. There are different kinds of walkers: standard walkers, walkers with wheels, and walkers with wheels and seats.

- **Standard walker**

A standard walker has 4 legs. The legs can be adjusted to be as high or as low as you need them to be. The hand rests should be as high as your hip.

Move the walker by picking it up and placing the legs flat on the ground one step in front of you.

To use a standard walker safely, you need to have enough strength in your upper arms, have pretty good balance, and be able to move it properly.

- **Walker with wheels**

Walkers with wheels are easier to use than standard walkers. A walker may have 2 wheels in front and 2 legs in back, or it may have 4 wheels. Brakes are in the back. This type of walker is not lifted when you walk. Push the wheeled walker in the direction you want to go. To stop, push down on the back legs.

It's hard to use a wheeled walker on a thick carpet. Also, you need enough control to keep the walker from rolling too far ahead of you.

- **Walker with a seat**

A walker with a seat can hold someone who weighs up to 300 pounds. It works like the walker with wheels.

Ask your healthcare provider or physical therapist about the best walker for you.

## How do I make sure that a walker fits me?

To make sure that a walker fits you:

1. Put on the shoes you will be wearing when you use the walker.
2. Stand up straight.
3. Put the walker in front of and partly around you.
4. When you are standing with your arms relaxed at your sides, the walker handgrip should be at about wrist level.

## How do I use a walker?

Remember to keep your head up, stay within the frame of the walker, and put equal pressure on both sides of the walker at the same time. This helps you keep your balance and prevent falls. Ask an expert (a physical or occupational therapist) to show you how to use the walker correctly. Here are some tips.

### **Walking with the walker:**

When you are resting and not walking:

- Keep the walker slightly in front of you and partly around you with your weight on your stronger leg and hands.
- Your elbow should bend about 30 degrees when your hands are on the handgrips.

When you are walking with a walker it is important to move in the appropriate sequence, which is: walker, step, step.

1. Move the walker the length of one step ahead of you. Keep the legs of the walker flat on the floor or ground.
2. Push down on the walker with your arms and move your weaker leg forward.
3. Move your stronger leg forward up to or slightly ahead of the weaker leg.

Repeat these steps to keep walking: walker, weaker leg, stronger leg.

### **Standing from a chair:**

It helps to sit in a firm chair. An overstuffed chair or sofa is hard to get out of. Chairs with armrests may be easier for you to get out of.

1. Place the walker in front of you. Do not pull on the walker when you stand up. It is too unstable to support weight when it is pulled on.
2. Slide forward in the chair, with your weaker leg in front and your stronger leg bent near the chair.
3. If you are in a chair with armrests, use both hands to push down on the armrests of the chair. While straightening your stronger leg, rise to standing. In a chair without armrests, push down on the chair seat with the hand opposite your weaker leg. Keep your other hand on the center of the walker's crossbar.

Never put both hands on the walker while you are getting up from sitting. Wait until you are standing to put both hands on the walker.

4. Stand, steady your balance, and put your hands on the walker handgrips.

### **How do I make sure I'm using the walker safely?**

- Check that the rubber tips of the walker are not worn out. Replace them if needed.
- Place the walker no more than the length of 1 step in front of you as you walk. You will not have enough support if you move the walker too far ahead of you.
- Don't step too far into the walker when you are walking. You may lose your balance.
- Don't lean on the walker when you are getting up or sitting down. This could tip the walker over.
- Try to avoid wet surfaces. Take small steps if you must walk on a wet or slippery surface.
- Remove throw rugs or mats. They can be very slippery.
- Don't use your walker on stairs.

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