

Walkers



Walkers are used to improve balance and to partially or fully decrease weightbearing to the lower extremity. Walkers offer a much broader level of stability than a cane or crutch affording the widest base of support with the floor. A standard walker has no wheels. A 2-wheel walker has wheels only on the front legs. Typically, a type of glider (or tennis ball) is used on the back legs of the 2-wheel walker to allow movement without having to lift the walker. Walkers are height adjustable through a push-pin system on the legs. There are two height choices for walkers, much like crutches, so knowing the height of the user is important when choosing the proper piece. Walkers are generally made of aluminum. A 2-wheel walker measures about 24" across, at the wheels, for clearance through doors.

Your Walker – How to fit, safety tips and usage

If you are using a basket accessory, ensure that you attach it according to the manufacturer's instructions. You do not want to hang anything else on your walker, either on the front or sides. This could harm locking mechanisms or unbalance your walker. Before using your walker ensure that all attachments are locked in place.

Measuring your wrist height to determine the best fit for your walker

- Stand comfortably, with assistance from a friend, if required, with your arms hanging loosely at your sides. Measure the distance from the floor to your wrist. This is how high from the ground your walker's grips (handles) should be. Allowing approx. 20-30 degrees bend in the elbow is also appropriate.
- To use your walker properly and to avoid pain in your back or arms, you do not want to bend over to hold your walker nor do you want to reach up to hold your walker. You need to stand as erect as possible and grip your walker easily and comfortably. Adjust the height of the walker by adjusting all four legs equally so the walker is level. If you are using two wheels on the front of your walker, ensure that the back of the walker is level with the front.
- Glide skis should not be used on all four leg extensions at once. When using a walker, the rear legs with rubber tips or glide skis remain on the ground – you lift the front of the walker when walking. Glide skis are used on rear legs so that the walker does not snag on a carpet.

Here are the main tips for using your walker safely:

- What you wear when using a walker is an important safety issue: Clothing should be comfortably loose but not able to become entwined with your walker. Wear nonskid footwear – shoes or slippers with rubber, not leather, soles. Bare feet or wearing just socks is not advised when using a walker. Get into the habit of wearing proper footwear.
- Tripping is more common than slipping with a walker so make sure your living and bedroom areas are clear of clutter. You should remove loose rugs and ensure all carpeting is nailed down. Wipe up floor spills quickly to prevent a fall.
- Ensure the grips (handles) of your walker are comfortable to use and that the grip itself won't slip around the walker handle.
- If your walker folds up for storing convenience, make sure it is locked open before using your walker.

Getting up from a chair:

- Put the walker in front of your chair and slide forward in the chair.
- With your hands on the arms of the chair, slowly stand up. Do not use the walker to hold onto while attempting to stand up from a chair. Use your arms to lift you from the chair, gain your balance, then reach with one hand for the centre of the walker.
- Bring your walker towards you so that you are standing just inside the walker. Transfer both hands to the handles of the walker.
- Stand with your walker until you feel balanced and ready to walk.

Walking with your walker:

- When you are ready to walk, move the walker forward about one footstep ahead of you. Ensure that all four legs are firmly on the ground.
- When walking, place your strong foot forward first, then move your other foot forward. Pick up and move the walker, then, when the walker is firmly back on the ground, take your next steps.
 1. Pick up and move your walker ahead of you
 2. Take a step with one foot then the other
 3. Have both feet on the ground before you again move your walker
 4. Pick up and move your walker ahead of you
 5. Take a step with one foot then the other
 6. Have both feet on the ground before you again move your walker
 7. Practice these steps until you are comfortable with them
- Do not hold your walker too close to you or too far away. Take small, confident steps to establish a comfortable and safe rhythm with your walk.
- Look ahead while you are walking, don't look down at your feet. You should be confident that you have removed all items that could cause you to trip. Looking ahead helps you gain and maintain good balance.

Sitting down:

- Stand with your back to the chair and the back of your legs touching the chair.
- Set the walker firmly on the floor in front of you, slightly away from you so you can bend your body towards your walker. Your backside should be over the centre of the chair.
- Place your weight on your legs, as much as possible.
- Keep one hand lightly on your walker while you reach for the armrest with your other hand. Firmly grasp the armrest and transfer your weight to that arm and your legs. Next, move your other hand from your walker to the other armrest and transfer the rest of your weight to that arm.
- Slowly sit down and slide backward into your chair. If you find you can't hold your weight with your arms while you slowly sit down, try bending your knees more.

Please remember that the above points are part of a sensible guideline. These points are for information purposes only. You should always seek the advice of your medical professional or other qualified health provider with any questions you may have with regard to fitting and using a walker.