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# Patient Instructions

## Walkers

YOUR DOCTOR WILL ORDER EITHER A STATIONARY OR A RECIPROCAL WALKER FOR YOU, DEPENDING ON YOUR NEEDS. YOUR DOCTOR WILL ALSO RECOMMEND AN APPROPRIATE GAIT OR WALKING PATTERN, BASED ON YOUR CONDITION. THIS INSTRUCTION WILL COVER ALL FOUR-GAIT PATTERNS.

**STATIONARY WALKER:** Usually lightweight, inexpensive, and very stable, a stationary walker consists of an adjustable metal frame with handgrips and four legs. Most stationary walkers have no movable parts, although some models are available with small front wheels. Some models also fold up for travel and easy storage.

**RECIPROCAL WALKER:** This type of walker consists of a metal frame with handgrips, four legs, and a hinge mechanism that allows one side to be advanced ahead of the other. Its height is usually adjustable from 27 to 37 inches (69 to 94 centimeters) and some models fold up for storage and travel. The reciprocal walker is flexible and “walks” with you.

**FEELING COMFORTABLE WITH YOUR WALKER:** Put on the shoes you will be wearing when you use the walker. Then stand up straight with your feet close together. Relax your shoulders and put the walker in front of and partially around you. Now grasp the sides of the walker and look at the position of your elbows so that they are nearly straight. If they are not, adjust the walker’s height by pushing in the button on each of the walker’s legs and sliding the tubing up or down as adjusted the legs to the same height. Now try the walker. You should be able to move it without bending over. If you still do not feel comfortable, try adjusting the height again.

### **COPING WITH A FALL:**

1. If you fall while using a walker, call for help before you try to get up. If no help is available, use the following method to help yourself up.
2. Look around the room for a low, sturdy piece of furniture, such as a coffee table. Inch backward toward the table by pushing your hands down on the floor and lifting your buttocks up. As you do this, pull the walker with one hand.

3. When you get to the piece of furniture, place your walker near it. Then reach back and place both hands on the tabletop and lift your buttocks onto the table.
4. Place the walker in front of you and raise yourself to a standing position by pushing your hands down on the handgrips.
5. Remember: It is normal to feel a little dizzy when you first stand up. Take a moment to gain your balance.

#### **SITTING DOWN WITH A WALKER:**

1. Begin by choosing a sturdy armchair. Stand with your back to the chair and with the walker directly in front of you.
2. Place the back of your stronger leg against the seat of the chair. Carefully lift your weaker leg slightly off the floor. Now grasp the chair's armrest with the hand on your weak side. Shift your weight to your stronger leg and the hand grasping the armrest. Then grasp the other armrest with your free hand.
3. Balancing yourself between both arms, gently lower yourself into the chair and slide backward. After you are seated, place the walker beside your chair.

#### **GETTING UP WITH A WALKER:**

1. Pull the walker in front of you. Slide forward in the chair.
2. Place the back of your stronger leg against the seat. Then move your weaker leg forward. Now place both hands on the armrests and push yourself to a standing position. Support your weight with your stronger leg and the opposite hand. Then grasp the walker's handgrip with your free hand.
3. Grasp the free handgrip with your other hand. Now distribute your weight evenly between your hands and your stronger leg. Take a moment to get your balance. Steady yourself, take a deep breath, and you're off.

#### **USING A TWO-POINT GAIT:**

1. Positioning the Walker: Stand the walker in front of and partially around you. Keep your weight evenly distributed between your legs and the walker.
2. Moving forward: Simultaneously advance the walker's right side and your left foot. Next, advance your walker's left side and your right foot. Continue in this manner.

#### **USING A TWO-POINT GAIT WITH SWING THROUGH:**

1. **Shifting Your Weight:** Stand with the walker in front of and partially around you. Then, distribute your weight evenly between the walker and your stronger leg. Hold your weaker foot off the floor. Now simultaneously shift your weight to your stronger leg while you lift and advance the walker about 8 inches (20 centimeters). Do not put any weight on your weaker leg.
2. **Moving Forward:** Swing your stronger leg about 8 inches forward while you support your weight on the walker. Repeat these steps, moving the walker first and then your stronger leg. Remember: do not put any weight on your weaker leg.

#### **USING A THREE-POINT GAIT:**

1. **Moving Your Weaker:** Place the walker slightly in front of you. Distribute most of your weight between your stronger leg and the walker, but try to support some weight on your weaker leg as well. Now, shift all of your weight to your stronger leg while you lift and advance your weaker leg and walker as far as 8 inches (20 centimeters).
2. Next shift your weight to your weaker leg and the walker, while you move your stronger leg as far as 8 inches forward. Repeat these steps, moving first the walker and your weaker leg and then your stronger leg. Never attempt to put all of your weight on your weaker leg.

#### **USING A FOUR-POINT GAIT:**

1. **Moving Your Left Foot Forward:** Stand the walker in front of and partially around you. Distribute your weight evenly between the walker and your legs. Then move the right side of the walker forward. Now move your left foot forward.
2. Move the left side of the walker forward. Then move your right foot forward to complete the four-point gait. Repeat both procedures to continue walking.