

Chapter 27

AMBULATION

What You Will Learn

- The purposes of ambulation
- Reasons the client may need assistance in ambulating
- The In-Home Aide's responsibilities when assisting the client with ambulation
- Types of equipment that may be used when assisting the client with ambulation
- How to ambulate client using a gait belt according to proper procedure
- How to ambulate client with a walker according to proper procedures
- How to ambulate client with a cane according to proper procedures

Purposes of Ambulation

The term ambulate means to walk. Ambulating the client keeps him more active and improves muscle tone and strength in his legs. It also slows loss of bone mass and density related to osteoporosis. The client who is up walking has increased peristalsis and circulation. The client also gets a sense of accomplishment and maintains greater independence.

Reasons Why Clients May Need Assistance with Ambulation

Some clients who have been ill or are recovering from an injury or surgery may need help with walking. The client may have decreased muscle strength or a change in his center of gravity or posture. Some clients need help with ambulation because of a decrease in their sensory perception or impaired balance. Confusion, medications and distractions can all affect a client's ability to walk independently.

The In-Home Aide's Responsibilities when Ambulating Clients

Be aware of safety considerations and use good body mechanics when ambulating a client. Dress the client appropriately. Clients should wear stockings or socks and nonskid shoes to prevent falls. Allow the client to sit on side of bed before ambulating to allow time for him to gain his balance.

NOTE: ALWAYS USE A GAIT BELT PER IN-HOME PROVIDER'S POLICY AND THE SERVICE PLAN.

Make sure objects and other people are out of the way and that there are no slippery floors. Ambulate the client in an uncluttered area. Have a chair ready for the client at the

other end or at a resting point along the way. Most of the time, you ambulate at the client's side, with your arm/hand for support, standing on the client's weaker side and slightly behind him. If the client is encouraged to use a weak leg, stand on the weak side.

Observe the client's steadiness of gait, balance, and endurance. As you walk with the client, observe for signs of fatigue such as difficulty breathing, sweating, dizziness, and rapid heart beat. If these occur, allow the client to rest. Ensure that there are rubber tips on all canes and non-rolling walkers.

If client loses weight-bearing ability, pull the client's body into close alignment with your hip/thigh area by using the gait belt and lower to floor using large muscles of your legs.

Equipment Used for Ambulation

When using a transfer or gait belt, grasp the belt with both hands and use it to guide the client. Walk slowly and allow the client to set the pace. Walk with the client by placing one hand around the back of the gait belt with palms up and the other hand under the front of the gait belt (Figure 27.1). Walk on the client's weaker side and encourage him to hold the handrail, if available, with his strong arm.

*Figure 27.1
Gait Belt*



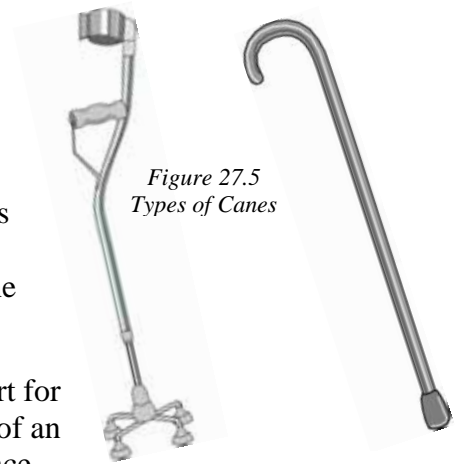
Walkers (Figures 27.2, 27.3) are used for the client who requires some support when walking due to imbalance or weakness. The client must be able to bear weight on at least one foot, remain balanced in an upright position, and have use of hands and arms. The height of the walker should be adjusted so that the client is standing straight with elbows slightly flexed (approximately at hip height). When a walker without wheels is being moved, the client's feet should not be moving. It should never be slid along the floor or ground. Always instruct the client to move the walker forward by lifting it up.

*Figures 27.2-27.3
Types of Walkers*



Canes (see Figure 27.5) are used by clients who have weakness or paralysis on one side of the body. It should be used on the client's stronger side to balance his weight between the cane and his weaker side.

The height of the cane should be such that the client holds it with his elbow slightly bent when walking. Three-point and four-point canes give more support than single tip canes but may be harder to move. The flat side of cane should be against the side of the leg, and extended cane legs should be away from the client's legs. The tip of the cane should be about six to ten inches to the outside of the foot. The bottom of the cane should be covered with a rubber tip to prevent sliding.



*Figure 27.5
Types of Canes*

A brace is used for the client who needs specific support for weakened muscles/joints or to provide immobilization of an injured part. Check for loose screws or bolts on the brace and report them to the supervisor/nurse. Check the skin where the brace is applied for any signs of breakdown and report to the supervisor/nurse. Prop the brace when not in use. Never lay it flat because it could warp. Refer to the service plan and instructions from the supervisor/nurse for information regarding use of a brace.

Prosthesis is an artificial limb. It is used for the client who is missing an arm or leg. Observe skin on the stump for any signs of breakdown and record and report. Encourage the client to wear prosthesis as much as possible. If needed, help the client put on prosthetic according to service plan.

Chapter 27

AMBULATION

PROCEDURE FOR AMBULATING CLIENT USING A GAIT BELT:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Explain what you are going to do.
3. Assist the client to sit on the edge of the bed.
4. Pause and allow the client to sit on the edge of the bed for a few moments to regain his balance.
5. Assist the client in putting on socks and nonskid shoes.
6. Put a gait belt around the client's waist.
7. Stand in position of good body mechanics.
8. Assist the client to a standing position by straightening your legs as you lift with the gait belt and the client pushes down with his hands on the mattress.
9. Pause to allow the client to regain balance.
10. Walk with the client by placing one hand on the gait belt in front of his waist and your other hand in back under the gait belt. Walk on the weaker side and encourage the client to hold the handrail, if available, with strong arm.
11. Walk in the same pattern as the client (both step with left foot at the same time). Assist the client to step forward with strong foot first.
12. Walk the client the distance instructed by supervisor or as indicated by the service plan.

NOTE: IF THE CLIENT LOSES WEIGHT-BEARING ABILITY, PULL THE CLIENT'S BODY INTO CLOSE ALIGNMENT WITH YOUR HIP/THIGH AREA BY USING THE GAIT BELT AND LOWER HIM TO THE FLOOR USING THE LARGE MUSCLES OF YOUR LEGS.

13. Return the client to the bed/chair.
14. Make sure the client is comfortable.
15. Remove the gait belt.
16. Wash your hands.
17. Record observations.

Chapter 27

AMBULATION

PROCEDURE FOR AMBULATING A CLIENT WITH A WALKER:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Explain what you are going to do.
3. If using a hospital bed, lower the bed to lowest level.
4. Assist the client to sit on the edge of the bed.
5. Pause and allow the client to sit on the edge of the bed a few moments to regain his balance.
6. Assist the client in putting on socks and nonskid shoes.
7. Apply a gait belt.
8. Stand in a position of good body mechanics.
9. Assist the client to a standing position by straightening your legs as you lift with the gait belt and the client pushes down with his hands on the mattress.
10. Instruct the client to position his body within the frame of the walker.
11. Instruct the client to move the walker forward by lifting it up, moving it forward, and setting it down.
12. Instruct the client to take a step forward with the weak leg.
13. Instruct the client to move strong leg forward.
14. Instruct the client to take short steps and keep his head up and eyes looking forward.
15. Walk the client the distance instructed by supervisor/nurse as indicated in the service plan.
16. Return the client to bed or a chair. To ambulate backward, the client steps back with his strong foot, takes a step back with his weak foot, then walker is moved back. Have the client feel for the arm of chair or top of mattress with his hand.
17. Assist the client into the chair or bed; make sure the client is comfortable.
18. Wash your hands.
19. Record observations.

Chapter 27

AMBULATION

PROCEDURE FOR AMBULATING A CLIENT WITH A CANE:

1. Wash your hands.
2. Explain what you are going to do.
3. Lower the bed to lowest level; assist client to sit on edge of bed.
4. Pause and allow the client to sit on the edge of the bed a few moments to regain his balance.
5. Assist the client in putting on socks and nonskid shoes.
6. Apply a gait belt.
7. Stand in a position of good body mechanics.
8. Assist the client to a standing position by straightening your legs as you lift with the gait belt and the client pushes down with his hands on the mattress.
9. Instruct the client to move the cane forward and a little to the outside of his strong leg. Client should use the cane on his stronger side.
10. Instruct the client to take short steps and keep his head up and eyes looking forward.
11. Instruct the client to move his weak foot forward to line up evenly with the tip of the cane.
12. Instruct the client to put weight on the cane and weak foot while swinging his strong foot forward.
13. Walk in the same pattern as the client (both step with left foot at the same time).
14. Walk the client the distance instructed by supervisor/nurse as indicated in the service plan.
15. Return the client to bed/chair.
16. Make sure the client is comfortable.
17. Wash your hands.
18. Record observations.

Chapter Review

1. What are the purposes of ambulation?
2. What are reasons the client may need assistance in ambulating?
3. What are the In-Home Aide's responsibilities when assisting the client with ambulation?
4. What types of equipment that may be used when assisting the client with ambulation?
5. How do you ambulate client using a gait belt according to proper procedure?
6. How do you ambulate client with a walker according to proper procedure?
7. How do you ambulate client with a cane according to proper procedure?

Student Exercise

Complete the following short-answer questions.

1. List three purposes of ambulation.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

2. List three reasons a client may need assistance with ambulation.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.

3. Name five types of equipment used to assist with ambulating a client.
 - a.
 - b.
 - c.
 - d.
 - e.

Circle the letter that corresponds to the correct answer.

4. The client uses a cane on _____.
 - a. either side
 - b. weaker side
 - c. both sides
 - d. stronger side

5. The In-Home Aide's responsibility in ambulating a client is to _____.
 - a. ambulate behind the client
 - b. stand on the client's stronger side
 - c. observe for signs of fatigue
 - d. guide the client toward activity area