

Wheelchair and Other Ambulatory Aides

Learner Workbook



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WHEELCHAIR AND OTHER AMBULATORY AIDES

This course is designed to familiarize you with wheelchairs and other common ambulatory aides. We will focus on safety issues and appropriate assistance techniques. Before we begin, it is important to know you should never decide the type or frequency of ambulatory aide to be used by a resident; that decision should be made by an appropriately licensed medical professional.

Fundamentals of Care

Never prescribe the use of a wheelchair, walker, or other ambulatory device. Ambulatory devices must be prescribed by the resident's physician.

Never allow residents to use a device prescribed and/or adjusted by someone else. Be sure to report any changes in ambulation to the physician. We should remind and provide assistance only, arrange for the resident to be trained in how to use his/her device by a licensed medical professional.

Do not attempt to adjust a device for a resident. If you have concerns about a device, arrange for a consult by an appropriate licensed medical professional.

Assist the resident to keep the device clean.

If you are ever unsure of how to use/assist with a device, ask your supervisor for clarification.

DO NOT use a walker as a "scooter" or transport device.

Label devices with the resident's name. Be sure to keep devices nearby, such as during meals.

Wheelchairs

Some residents must use a wheelchair at all times; others may only need it for long distances. Clarify with the resident's physician. Do not use the wheelchair when it is not necessary, encouraging/assisting ambulation when approved by the resident's physician is important for long term health and independence.

Make the experience positive:

- Explain where he/she will be going.
- Engage in friendly conversation.

Safety is your priority!

- Exit the room into the hallways backwards.
- Remind resident to keep their hands, feet, and elbows tucked in, especially when going through doorways.
- Scan the environment and monitor for hazards.
- Keep a safe distance from other people.
- Use caution when going around corners.
- Use footrests appropriately.
- Closely monitor residents with dementia.

Special Care Concerns

Residents who require a wheelchair for ambulation at all times should not be left in his or her wheelchair for extended periods of time.

- Assist them to transfer to a chair or couch when appropriate.
- Remind/assist him or her to shift his/her weight and body position while sitting.
- Use cushions or foam pads if recommended by the physician.

Assist the resident to maintain good posture while sitting; avoid slouching, etc.

Conduct routine skin checks, at least daily.

- Report any redness or other concerns.

Monitor for edema or swelling, especially in the lower legs and feet.

Walkers and Canes

There are many styles of walkers, be sure each resident uses the device prescribed for him or her. Keep the walker or cane within easy reach of the resident at all times.

The walker or cane should be properly fitted by an appropriately skilled professional, such as a physical therapist.

NEVER rush or hurry a resident while he or she is ambulating. Never pull or tug on a walker while a resident is using it.

Psychosocial Concerns

Residents may be embarrassed or having a decreased sense of self confidence because they are using an assistive device.

Work with your activity director to ensure appropriate activities are available for your residents.