

How to Help Someone Who Uses a Wheelchair: Including Walkers, Crutches and Canes Caregiving Series: Volume 2

Objectives

Upon completion of this training, the viewer will understand:

- Safe methods and special precautions for helping those who use wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and canes
- How to do stand pivot transfers in a variety of settings
- Using a gait belt
- Principles of body mechanics
- How to maneuver a wheelchair on ramps and curbs

Outline

1. Safety and sensitivity issues
2. Principles of body mechanics
3. Body control points
4. Gait belt use
5. Principles of moving from sitting to standing
6. Parts of a wheelchair
7. Slide boards
8. Bathroom equipment
9. Stand pivot transfers
 - Bed to wheelchair, bedside commode to bed
 - Wheelchair to commode, commode to wheelchair
 - Wheelchair to shower bench, shower bench to wheelchair
10. Squat pivot transfer
11. Transfer from a soft lounge chair
12. Vehicle transfer
13. Loading and unloading wheelchair from a vehicle
14. Maneuvering a wheelchair on ramps and curbs
15. How to prevent pressure ulcers
16. Types of walkers, crutches and canes and their use



Definitions and Key Points

1. Mobility aids: Devices such as wheelchairs, walkers, crutches and canes support increased physical movement and independence.

2. Principles of body mechanics: A set of rules that help maintain the natural curves of the body during any movement.

3. Body control points: The pelvis and the knees are the main body control points, providing support and balance during movement. If a person's knees are not strong, the caregiver can provide further support by placing his or her knees against the knees or on each side of the weak knee of the person being helped.

4. Gait belt: A belt placed around the waist of the person being moved and used by the caregiver as a way of supporting the person during transfers or walking. Never place a gait belt over drains, tubes or wounds.

5. Parts of a wheelchair

- **Arm rests:** Used to support the arms. They can be lifted up and out of the way or removed if needed.
- **Wheel lock:** A feature on the wheel of the wheelchair that sets the wheelchair in a locked position. The wheelchair does not move when the lock is set.
- **Leg rests:** Used to support the legs and feet. They can swing away or be removed as needed.
- **Anti-tip bars:** A feature located at the back of the wheelchair that prevents a person from tipping backward. Tip bars are used to tip the wheelchair up and down curbs.

6. Slide board: Sometimes called transfer boards, slide boards are made of plastic or wood and are used to help transfer a person who is unable to stand. The person sits on the edge of the board and slides from one surface to another.

7. Bathroom equipment can make bathing and toileting easier and safer.

- **Raised toilet seats** reduce the distance the body needs to be lowered. They come with or without armrests.
- **Shower benches** are helpful for bathing. Two legs of the shower bench remain outside the tub. Shower chairs come with or without back support.
- **Wall-mounted grab bars** provide additional support and safety in the bathroom.



8. Transfer: Moving someone from one surface area to another, for instance, from a bed to a wheelchair. At least half of the work in a transfer is in the set up. The set up is the correct positioning of the wheelchair and the person you are moving.

9. Stand pivot transfer: In a stand pivot transfer, the person you are assisting moves into a standing position and then pivots into the new position by taking small steps.

10. Moving down a ramp: When moving down a ramp or hill, the person in the wheelchair faces uphill and you are positioned behind the wheelchair. You move downhill first, keeping your legs bent as you maneuver down the ramp.

11. To climb a curb, move as close to the curb as possible. Use the tip bars that are located in the back of the wheelchair to tip the front wheels onto the curb. Then, using good body mechanics, lift the back wheels up the curb.

12. To go down a curb, lower the back wheels first, and use the tip bars to gently lower the front wheels.

13. Pressure ulcers: If a person in a wheelchair does not move frequently, he or she may develop pressure ulcers. When blood flow is restricted by unrelieved pressure on areas of the body, skin and tissue begins to break down. If left untreated, pressure ulcers can become a serious medical problem.

14. Preventing pressure ulcers: Moving and repositioning is the key to preventing pressure ulcers. Have the person shift his or her weight frequently to relieve pressure. Remind the person to lift up on the wheelchair if he or she can. Check pressure points regularly. Report reddened areas to the nurse. Even if redness looks slight, it can indicate considerable damage underneath the surface of the skin.



**Test Your Understanding of
How to Help Someone Who Uses a Wheelchair**

Name _____ Date _____

1. Wheelchair safety in the home means:
 - A. Adequate lighting
 - B. Removing clutter from the floor
 - C. Making sure that there is enough room to move around furniture
 - D. All of the above

2. The principles of body mechanics include:
 - A. The mechanical parts of a wheelchair
 - B. A set of rules that help maintain correct body alignment
 - C. Minimal, moderate and maximum assist
 - D. Squat and stand pivots

3. The correct way to lift is:
 - A. Locking the knees and lifting with the back
 - B. Bending the knees and lifting with the legs
 - C. Holding the object away from the body
 - D. None of the above

4. The natural way to move from sitting to standing includes:
 - A. Moving to the edge of the chair
 - B. Leaning forward
 - C. Shifting the weight from the buttocks to the feet
 - D. All of the above

5. When maneuvering a wheelchair down a hill or ramp:
 - A. The person in the wheelchair faces uphill and you are positioned behind the wheelchair
 - B. The position doesn't matter as long as the wheel locks are used
 - C. The person in the wheelchair faces downhill and you are positioned behind the wheelchair
 - D. None of the above

6. Pressure ulcers can develop at pressure points that include:
 - A. Back of the spine
 - B. Elbows and heels
 - C. Sitting bones
 - D. All of the above



7. To prevent pressure ulcers make sure that:
- A. You regularly check the person's skin for redness
 - B. The person changes position often
 - C. Report redness to the physician or nurse
 - D. All of the above
8. When helping a person who uses a walker, crutches or cane:
- A. Stand on the person's strong side and slightly ahead
 - B. The person should look down at the feet when walking
 - C. The device should fit so there is no bend in the elbow
 - D. None of the above
9. When you lift an object:
- A. Face the direction of movement.
 - B. Always bring the object you are moving as close to you as possible
 - C. Spread your feet apart to make a solid base
 - D. All of the above
10. When setting up for a stand pivot transfer from bed to wheelchair:
- A. Armrests are removed from the wheelchair
 - B. The wheelchair is placed even with the bed
 - C. The person is sitting at the edge of the bed
 - D. Position the feet close together
11. Proper body mechanics includes bending at the knees and hips not at the waist.
- ____ True ____ False
12. Transfer means moving a person from one surface to another.
- ____ True ____ False
13. Slippers and stocking feet are proper footwear for wheelchair transfers.
- ____ True ____ False
14. Never place a gait belt over drains, feeding tubes or wounds.
- ____ True ____ False



15. Anyone using crutches, cane or walker should look down at the ground for safety reasons.

True False

16. A cane is used on the opposite side of the weak leg.

True False

17. When providing care, allow the person to help as much as possible.

True False

18. Slight reddening at a pressure point may be an indication of a pressure ulcer.

True False

19. Older adults need more light to see well compared to younger people.

True False

20. When lifting, bend at the waist.

True False

