

Partners in Quality Care

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In-Home Aides Partners in Quality Care is a monthly newsletter published for AHHC of NC and SCHCA member agencies.

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Assisting with ambulation and using assistive devices:

The term ambulate means to move the body by walking with or without assistance.

Talk with the client about assisting them to walk—what they want to do for themselves and what you will do to assist. Remind the client, if necessary, which shoes to wear.

Assistive devices are types of equipment that make it easier for clients to do Activities of Daily Living (ADLs). Walking devices, such as walkers, canes, and crutches, may be needed to help support clients when walking. The physician determines the type(s) of assistive device according to the client's needs and abilities.

Sometimes, clients want or need your assistance to use a cane, walker, crutches, or wheelchair. Always ask if they want you to assist them. If they say yes, make sure you are clear about what they want you to do.

Bedside commodes- Can be next to the bed, placed in the shower, put over the toilet; When fit correctly the knees should be level with or slight lower than the hips, never higher; It is best to place a bedside commode with a wall or sturdy piece of furniture behind it. This is to avoid tipping; Use a towel to protect the wall

Assisting clients to walk (ambulation) what to observe, record, report (ORR):

Observe, record, and report any changes in the client's condition or behavior during and after walking. Also, report any problems you noticed. These include:

- Client reports pain or discomfort with movement
- Client reports dizziness
- Client reports feeling faint or weak
- Problems with the skin



Safety tips: using walkers, canes and crutches:

- Make sure that all bolts are tightened and tips have rubber safety protectors
- Place walkers, canes, or crutches, when not in use, near the client but out of traffic pattern of the room.
- Assist client to put on walking shoes, not floppy slippers
- Remove obstacles from the client's path
- Reinforce instructions of the physical therapist (if applicable)
- Do not rush the client; allow plenty of time to practice walking
- Practice using assistive devices when the client's energy level is high



Walkers are small metal stands that the client leans on when walking from place to place. They are used for clients who have difficulty with balance or are weak and need additional support. Of all the types of assistive walking devices, walkers offer the greatest amount of stability because they provide four points of support. Some walkers have wheels and are pushed around, some are moved by lifting and others have seats attached so that the client may rest when necessary. The type of walker is ordered by the doctor.

Using Good Body Mechanics:

Moving your body correctly is a skill that requires your constant attention. How well you perfect the skill can mean the difference between a fatigued or injured back and a healthy back. Below are a few tips to help you use good body mechanics:

- Hold loads close to your body to minimize the effect of their weight.
- To prevent twisting injuries, move your torso — from your shoulders to your hips — as 1 solid unit.
- Keep your knees bent to make your legs work harder, reducing the stress on your back.
- Avoid quick, jerky movements.
- Tighten abdominal muscles to help support your movements.

Use of the Transfer(gait)Belt (be sure to talk to you agency supervisor about obtaining training in using a transfer belt if assigned on the client's plan of care)
The transfer (gait) belt is a belt worn by the client and used by the Home Care aide to hold on to the client during a transfer. It is used to help support a weak or unsteady client to move or walk. Apply the belt (as assigned) before beginning the transfer or before assisting the client to walk.

- ❖ Transferring from bed to chair and back
- ❖ Ambulating the client around the house
- ❖ Assisting in transferring the client in and out of the shower/tub
- ❖ Assisting family in transferring in and out of vehicle
- ❖ Assisting in climbing stairs
- ❖ Application of transfer belt- Receive proper teaching of transfer belt application- belt should be snug around client's waist (It goes around the patient's center of gravity which is close to the belly button) Make sure you are allowed to use one!

Ambulation- When assisting your client's to walk, follow these general rules (wash hands)

- ❖ Assist the client to put on the gait belt, if needed and assigned.
- ❖ Assist the client to standing position, and then count to 10 before proceeding
- ❖ Stand by the client's weaker side and slightly behind, with your feet apart
- ❖ Grasp the gait belt in back with one hand while placing other hand in front of collarbone on the weaker side
- ❖ Do not rush the client, allow plenty of time, **and practice good body mechanics!**
- ❖ If the client becomes tired, wait a few minutes before proceeding. Calmly encourage and reassure the client as needed. Record the activity and report any difficulty such as dizziness, weakness, pain, or breathing difficulties.

Assistive Devices in the Home:

- Most common types of equipment found in the home are- walkers (most common), canes, crutches, wheelchairs, gait belts, sliding boards, reachers, hospital beds, hoier lifts, bedside commodes

The Aides Role in working with clients with assistive devices:

Eyes and Ears – you are many times the eyes and ears of the care team

- ❖ Identify potential safety issues – Report any potential safety issues with assistive devices used for your client’s care, notify your supervisor if you find something unsafe immediately
- ❖ **Do not use a piece of equipment that you have not been trained on or do not feel comfortable using. There are many types of Hoyer lifts and you may need specific training on the lift in the client’s home.**
- ❖ Ask- ask the client if they have ever done the activity you may be assisting with (such as a shower transfer) before you do it, ask how they are feeling and doing before you move them.

Reporting:

- ✔ Report if a piece of equipment used in the home does not seem to “fit” the client properly such as a walker that looks too short or too tall, if the client’s wheelchair is too big or too small (a client could fall out of a wheelchair that is too big or could get pressure ulcers from a wheelchair that is too small).
- ✔ Report if the client is unsteady during ambulation and if the caregiver in the home needs training in helping the client to ambulate or in the use of assistive devices such as gait belts, hoier lifts or other equipment
- ✔ Report if a bedside commode is not adjusted correctly or if any bathroom equipment appears unsteady

Reminder:

- ✔ Medications such as sleeping pills, anti-anxiety medications and narcotics (pain pills) can affect a client’s mental status making them dizzy and affecting their ability to function.

Tips to remember:

It is important for you to understand things such as:

The client’s diagnosis may affect the ability to move safely

Ask the care team if the client’s medications can affect the function specifically pain meds, anti anxieties, sleeping pills, etc...things that change the mental status

ASK THE CLIENT how they are feeling and doing before you move them and when you stand them up

Safety first - Be sure to ask your supervisor the meaning of abbreviations used on a plan of care. To avoid confusion, ask for assignments and directions to be written out clearly. (Don’t guess at abbreviations since one abbreviation may be used for more than one meaning). Be sure to ask for instructions and training in using equipment such as Hoyer lifts, gait belts, and other assistive devices that you may encounter in the home as part of the client’s care. Proper training is important to avoid injury to the client and yourself. Also report if you notice the client or family caregivers need training in using assistive devices.

Other tips- Use good body mechanics to prevent injury to yourself and your client. Keep your body in good physical condition. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes. Follow rules for safe moving and lifting. Practice infection control when positioning, moving and lifting your client.

Resources- NC PHCAST training phase II module 10; AHHC In-home aide teleconference – Assistive Devices in the Home, November 2014; Mosby’s textbook for the Home Care Aide, third edition. University of Minnesota Medical center- <http://www.uofmmedicalcenter.org/healthlibrary/Article/82572>

March 2015 Aide Newsletter- Mobility and Assistive Devices-POST TEST

Name _____ Date _____

1. Assistive devices are types of equipment that make it easier for clients to do activities of daily living- (check true or false)
True False
2. Good body mechanics benefits the worker but not the client- (check true or false)
True False
3. Of all the types of assistive walking devices, walkers offer the greatest amount of stability- (check true or false)
True False
4. To prevent twisting injuries, move your torso — from your shoulders to your hips as 1 solid unit - (check true or false)
True False
5. Proper training on using assistive devices is important to avoid injury to yourself and your client (check true or false):
True False
6. Using a transfer or gait belt does not require any special instructions - (check true or false)
True False
7. The In-home aide should report any potential safety issues with assistive devices used in the home (check true or false)
True False
8. All Hoyer lifts are the same (check true or false)
True False
9. The In-home aide should report if a client is unsteady during ambulation (check true or false)
True False
10. It is important to know if the client is taking medications that can affect their function (check true or false)
True False