

Lesson 1: Introduction

- There are different types of walking aids for different needs, including walking sticks, tripods and quadripods, elbow and axilla crutches, walking frames and rollators.
- A person might need the support of a walking aid if they:
 - Have weak leg muscles
 - Have poor balance
 - Can't put all their weight on one leg
 - Have pain when they stand or walk.
- Common conditions which can result in a person needing a walking aid include: diabetes, a broken leg, stroke, frailty, leg or foot amputation, arthritis and polio.
- Warning! Do not provide a walking aid if the person's weight is greater than the weight rating of the walking aid.

Lesson 2: Select

- The assessment helps you to understand whether the person might need referral to other health services. You should always refer the person to the appropriate service if they have: a fear of falling over or they fall often, a current or healed foot wound, feeling (sensation) problems, uncontrolled diabetes, or difficulty seeing or hearing.
- Selection of the walking aid is based on the person's health problems, their abilities, the environment where they live and what they want to do with their walking aid. The [selection table](#) can be used as a guide for selecting the most suitable walking aid, based on the assessment findings.
- If the person already has a walking aid, check if it is still meeting their needs and if any adjustments or repairs are needed.
- It is important to involve the person and the family during the assessment and selection process. Decisions should be made with the person (and their family when appropriate).

Lesson 3: Fit

- Before fitting the walking aid, the person should stand next to a rail, table or solid chair for support. They should have:
 - ✓ Their shoulders relaxed
 - ✓ Their arms at their side and a slight bend in their elbow
 - ✓ Their shoes on.
- For all types of walking aid, the height of the hand grip should be level with the person's wrist.
- A walking stick should be used on the person's stronger side.
- Forearm crutches should be fitted so that the forearm cuff is two finger widths below the elbow.
- Axilla crutches should be fitted so that the top of underarm pad is three finger widths below the person's armpit.
- Walking frames and rollators should be fitted so that the person's arms are a comfortable distance apart.

Lesson 4: Use

- Encourage the person to wear suitable shoes, to protect the feet from injury and wound development and reduce the risk of falls.
- Any person with feeling (sensation) problems in their feet should avoid hopping, wear suitable shoes and check their feet daily.
- Standing up with a walking aid:
 - Place feet under knees
 - Move to the edge of the chair/bed and lean forward
 - If using two crutches/sticks, hold them on the weaker side
 - Push up on the chair/bed with the free hand to stand up.
- Sitting down with a walking aid:
 - Stand in front of the chair/bed, with back of legs touching it
 - If using a rollator, put the brakes on
 - If using two crutches/sticks, hold them on the weaker side
 - Reach back with the free hand to hold onto the chair/bed and slowly sit down.
- Walking with a walking aid:
 - Place the walking aid in front of the body
 - Step forward with the weaker (or only) leg
 - Step forward with the stronger leg
 - If using a walking stick, hold it on the stronger side
 - If using a rollator, make sure the brakes are off before walking.
- Going up the stairs with axilla, elbow crutches and walking sticks:
 - Step up first with the strong (or only) leg
 - Next, step up with the walking aid and the weaker leg together.
- Going down the stairs with axilla, elbow crutches and walking sticks:
 - Place the walking aid on to the step and step down with the weak (or only) leg
 - Next, step down with the strong leg.
- Walking frames and rollators should not be used on stairs, but only to go up and down one step.
- Rubber tips should be checked regularly and replaced when they are worn.

Lesson 5: Follow-up

- The purpose of follow-up is to find out:
 - If the walking aid is still meeting the person's needs
 - If the walking aid needs any repairs or replacing
 - If the walking aid still fits well or needs any adjustments
 - If the person needs more training in safe and correct use of the walking aid
 - If the person needs referral to another service
 - When the next follow up should be.
- Check the condition of the walking aid, including:
 - Rubber tips
 - Hand grips
 - Underarm pads
 - Brakes on rollators (not too tight or too loose)
 - Metal or wooden shaft
 - Screws and bolts.

- Replace the walking aid if:
 - The shaft is cracked or broken
 - All or most removable parts of the walking aid need to be replaced.
- Repair the walking aid for small damage such as:
 - Tightening brakes and screws
 - Replacing worn underarm pads and rubber tips.
- Follow up actions might include:
 - Providing a new walking aid to the person after assessment (the assessment form might help you and the person to select the best walking aid)
 - Providing more training to the person or the caregiver
 - Making another follow up appointment
 - Referral to another service if the person has a new health problem.