



One minute guide

Walking Aids

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What is a walking aid?

A walking aid is a piece of equipment used to help someone walk who has an underlying condition which makes it difficult to balance or take steps safely. They are often used by people who are also wheelchair users. Walking aids may vary from a pair of sticks to a highly supportive frame.

Why use a walking aid?

- Walking is a developing skill which needs regular practice in order for it to become a useful way to get around.
- Using a walking aid may enable the child to participate in different play and social activities with their families and friends.
- Some children who start off by using a walking aid may progress to independent walking or a less supportive walking aid over time.

Where is a walking aid used?

You and your child's physiotherapist will plan how and where the walking aid should be used. Some children will use them every day as their main way of going about their daily routine. Other children will use them less frequently, with an adult helping them to practice their walking skills.

A walking aid can be used in a child's home, school or nursery. The needs of the person will be considered in each setting.

Types of walking aids

There are a variety of types and makes of walking aids. Your physiotherapist will carry out an assessment to identify the most suitable, often with a company rep.

There are three main categories of walking aids, although there are many different products in each category.

Sticks and crutches are examples of the simplest, and least supportive walking aids.



Simple walking frames that the child pushes in front, or where the child stands in an open fronted frame can offer more support.



Some walking frames are highly supportive, and can be adjusted in great detail to suit individual children.



TOP TIP! Take a photograph of the child using the walking aid when the physiotherapist first sets it up. If the position does not look the same when you are using it, contact the physiotherapist to discuss.

What checks should be carried out each time a walking aid is used?

PEOPLE

- The child who is to use the walking aid is well and happy that day.
- Check the child frequently to make sure they stay well throughout their time walking.
- The person assisting the child in the walking aid is fit and well. Have they had the relevant training on the equipment so they feel *confident* and *competent* using it?
- **NOTE:** Anyone helping a child use a walking aid should undertake **Moving and Handling Training** to prevent injury and help keep both the child and the person assisting safe.

EQUIPMENT

- Check the walking aid is complete with all supports/ parts needed.
- Wheels and brakes are in good working order.
- Check bolts are present and tightened.
- Straps and fabric/ upholstery are present and are not torn or worn.
- No obvious structural damage e.g. bent or broken wood/ metal, sharp edges.

ENVIRONMENT

- Check that the walking aid is suitable for the environment and activity proposed, e.g. outdoors/ grass/ uneven surfaces require activity or outdoor wheels.
- Walking aids should only be used in appropriate environments. Check for hazards e.g. wet floors, trip hazards, wires etc. in the area.
- Check whether the child needs adult supervision or assistance while using the walking aid.
- The manufacturer can provide more advice on safe use of the walking aid.

Is there a charge for walking aids?

Some walking aids are provided free of charge by the health service. If the health service is unable to provide your preferred walking aid, charity funding may be available.

If the walking aid is to be used in an education setting, there is no charge to families, but some charge to the school and/ or the education service.

Contact us:

To discuss if a walking aid is appropriate for your child, or for queries about an existing walking aid, contact your child's physiotherapist on the numbers below.

Central Admin Services: 0113 8433620 Email: childrenscommunityicanservices@nhs.net

St George's Centre (South) (0113 8432000)

Reginald Centre (East) (0113 8435700)

Wortley Beck (West) (0113 8438000)

Our core hours are 8:30am-5pm Monday to Friday.

Web: <https://www.leedscommunityhealthcare.nhs.uk/our-services-a-z/integrated-childrens-additional-needs-service-i-can4/childrens-physiotherapy/>

To check the progress of an equipment order or delivery, please contact Assisted Living Leeds on 0113 3783000.