

Ambulating the Patient with a Gait Belt: Step by Step Instructions

Supplies/Equipment:

- Gait belt
- Non-skid footwear (socks and/or shoes)
- Gloves (optional)

Step 1: Perform your opening duties.

- Knock on the door.
- Introduce yourself.
- Explain your title.
- Identify the patient.
- Describe the skill.
- Obtain permission.
- Close the privacy curtain.
- Perform handwashing.
- Gather supplies and equipment.

Step 2: If they are in bed, place the patient in an upright position.

- Place one of your arms behind both of the patient's shoulders with your hand wrapped around the shoulder furthest away from you.
- Place the other arm underneath both of the patient's knees with your hand wrapped around the knee furthest away from you.
- Position yourself correctly by keeping your back straight, positioning your feet apart, and bending your knees slightly.
- In a smooth and pivot fashion, swing their upper body sideways to a sitting position while simultaneously swinging their legs to the edge of the bed.
- Their feet should be positioned together and placed flat on the floor. Raise and lower the bed as needed.

Step 3: Have them stay in this position for at least 5 seconds.

- Hold onto them for a few seconds at first.
- Be sure they can sit up straight on their own.
- Ask them about weakness, dizziness, or lightheadedness.

Step 4: Put on their footwear.

- If it is non-skid socks alone, place them securely on each foot with the grips on the bottom of their feet.
- If it is their own personal footwear, make sure the shoes are non-skid and are placed and tied securely on each foot.

Step 5: Grab the gait belt.

- Place the belt around the patient's waist.
- Fasten it with the teeth gripping the belt securely.
- Be sure it isn't too tight or too loose by placing four fingers snugly between the belt and the patient.
- Ask the patient if the belt feels comfortable and secure.

Step 6: Position yourself properly to stand them up.

- Place your feet about a foot apart.
- Position one foot perpendicular to and in front of the patient's feet.
- Place your other foot parallel to the patient's body and perpendicular to the bed.

Step 7: Stand them up.

- Ask the patient to either place their hands on the bed or on your shoulders.
- Grip the belt securely with both hands behind the patient's back.
- Slowly count to three.
- On three, without jerking on the belt, firmly lift up to assist the patient to a standing position.
- Keep them standing still for at least 5 seconds until they completely catch their balance.
- Ask them if they are dizzy or lightheaded before continuing.
- Position yourself slightly behind them while facing the same direction they will be ambulating.
- Be sure to hold the gait belt firmly at all times with one or two hands either on the center of their back or on the side furthest from you.

Step 8: Assist them to ambulate.

- Tell the patient to begin walking when ready while allowing them to lead the way.
- Ask them often about dizziness and fatigue.
- Have them walk at least ten steps before turning around.
- Have them walk back to where they began at either their bed or chair.
- Be sure the back of their legs are slightly touching the bed or chair.
- Slowly and gently lower them onto the bed or chair while keeping your back straight and bending your knees.
- Gently remove the gait belt.
- All of this should be done in a slow, smooth, continuous, and controlled fashion without injuring the patient.

Step 9: If they are getting back in bed, make sure they get back in properly.

- Take off their footwear.
- Place one of your arms behind both of the patient's shoulders with your hand wrapped around the shoulder furthest away from you.
- Place the other arm underneath both of the patient's knees with your hand wrapped around the knee furthest away from you.

- Position yourself correctly by keeping your back straight, positioning your feet apart, and bending your knees slightly.
- In a smooth and pivot fashion, swing their upper body sideways to a lying position while simultaneously swinging their legs back onto the bed.
- Have them slide towards the center and up in bed as needed.

Step 10: Perform your closing duties.

- Place the call bell either in the bed or chair with the patient or within their reach.
- Adjust the head of the bed if desired.
- Keep the entire bed height in the lowest position.
- Make sure the bed alarm or chair alarm is on if necessary.
- Open the privacy curtain if desired.
- Ask the patient if they are comfortable and if they need anything else before you go.
- Check to make sure everything is clean and in its proper place.
- Adjust the lights if needed.
- Ask about the door being left open or closed.
- Perform hand hygiene.