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Gait Belt

A gait belt is a sturdy cloth strap, measuring about three inches wide and three feet long. Also known as a walking belt or transfer belt, it is a supportive aid used to help a weak or unsteady person to transfer or walk. You can hold onto the gait belt to give support when transferring a person from one position to another.

Applying and Using a Gait Belt in a Stand Pivot Transfer (Bed to Wheelchair)

- The gait belt gives you more control of the person's body. It is helpful when assisting someone who has difficulty moving into a standing position.
- Tell the person what you are about to do.
- Follow the instruction for setting up the wheelchair.
- Assist the person to a sitting position at the side of the bed.
- Place the gait belt around the hips over clothing. Some people find it easier to position the gait belt over the waist. Never place a gait belt over bare skin, drains, feeding tubes, or a colostomy.
- Tighten the belt until it is snug but uncomfortable. It should not create breathing difficulties or discomfort.
- At the beginning of the transfer, he should be in a sitting position at the edge of the bed with his hips closest to the wheelchair and his knees and feet angled away from the wheelchair.
- Position your foot between his feet and your knee between his knees.
- Your other foot should be behind about 2 feet back at a 45-degree angle. Your feet should be about a foot apart.
- Ask him to place his hands on the bed to help push up.
- Hold onto the gait belt at his waist with both hands.
- Count 1-2-3 together and on the count of 3, have him lean over slightly as he shifts his weight forward from his buttocks to his feet and pushes up with his hands. Shift your weight onto your back leg at the same time. Keep your back straight and knees bent. Help him into a standing position with one continuous movement.

- Continue to support him by holding the gait belt as he steps toward the wheelchair.
- Stop when he can feel the edge of the chair seat on the back of both of his legs.
- With his knees slightly bent, have him reach back and put one hand on each armrest of the chair to guide himself into the chair.
- Keep your back straight, bend your knees, and use your leg muscles as you help to lower him into the chair.

Helping Someone to Walk with or without a Gait Belt.

Walking is highly beneficial for maintaining health, independence, and a positive mood. If a person's condition allows, walk with him or her several times a day, even if it is only for short distances.

- Clear obstacles from the pathway before your begin.
- If you are using a gait belt, position it around the person's hips over the clothing. Some people find it easier to place the gait belt around the waist. Never use a gait belt over bare skin, drains, feeding tubes, or a colostomy.
- Tighten the belt until it is snug but comfortable. It should not create breathing difficulties or discomfort.
- Stand slightly behind and to one side of the person, holding onto the gait belt at each side of his waist. If you are walking without a gait belt, support him with one hand around his waist and the other supporting his elbow and forearm.
- Taking small steps, assist the person to walk.
- Encourage him to go a few more steps than he did during the previous walk.