Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Assisted Walking

This information explains what assisted walking is and how to do it.

About assisted walking

Assisted walking is a kind of careful, limited walking. Your healthcare provider may recommend assisted walking if you:

- Have a fracture (broken bone) or a potential fracture in your hip, leg, or foot.
- Are more likely to fracture a bone in your hip, leg, or foot.
- Had hip, leg, pelvis, or foot surgery.

It's important to follow all instructions your healthcare provider gives you.

You may need to use a walking aid, such as crutches, a cane, or a walker. You may also have a brace, cast, or splint on your affected leg. Your affected leg is the leg that was operated on or has the fracture.

A physical therapist will teach you how to walk correctly. If you're using a walking aid, they will change it to the height that works best for you or teach you how to make these changes yourself.

While you're doing assisted walking, avoid twisting motions on your affected leg. This means you should avoid turning your body while your affected leg is touching the ground. This will lower the chance of injuring your leg.

Types of assisted walking

Non-weight-bearing assisted walking

Non-weight-bearing assisted walking is when you don't put any of your weight on your affected leg.

To do this type of assisted walking:

- Don't let the foot of your affected leg touch the floor.
- Use crutches or a walker to help you walk.

Flat foot touch-down weight-bearing assisted walking

Flat foot touch-down assisted walking is when you don't put more than 10 pounds (4.5 kilograms) of your weight on your affected leg. Your physical therapist will use a scale to show you what this feels like.

To do this type of assisted walking:

- Let the foot of your affected leg touch the floor to keep you balanced.
- Don't put any extra weight on your affected leg when it touches the floor.
- Use crutches or a walker to help you walk.

Partial weight-bearing assisted walking

Partial weight-bearing assisted walking is when you can put less than half of your body weight on your affected leg. Your healthcare provider will tell you how much weight is safe for you.

To do this type of assisted walking:

- Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for how much weight to put on your affected leg.
- Use crutches or a walker to help you walk.

Weight-bearing as tolerated assisted walking

Weight-bearing as tolerated assisted walking is when you can put half to all of your weight on your affected leg. The amount of weight you put on your leg may change depending on how comfortable you feel.

To do this type of assisted walking:

- Change the amount of weight you put on your affected leg based on how your leg feels.
- Use 1 or 2 crutches or a cane to help you walk. Follow instructions from your healthcare provider or physical therapist for switching from 2 crutches to using 1 crutch or a cane.

Full weight-bearing assisted walking

Full weight-bearing assisted walking is when you can put all of your weight on your affected leg.

To do this type of assisted walking:

- Use a walking aid, such as a crutch or cane, if your healthcare provider tells you to.

If you have any questions about the amount of weight you're placing on your leg, call your healthcare provider or physical therapist.

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

Assisted Walking - Last updated on July 7, 2026
All rights owned and reserved by Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center