Rehabilitation Therapy – Ambulation with a Walker

PURPOSE:
To ensure safe ambulation with a walker and with a cane. To increase endurance postural stability, control during transitional movements, and dynamic balance.

CONSIDERATIONS:
1. For patients who use an assistive device for walking due to muscle weakness or balance problems.

EQUIPMENT:
Gait Belt
Walker
Walker with secure rubber suction cups on all legs, no rough or damaged edges on hand rests

PROCEDURE:
1. Adhere to Standard Precautions.
2. Explain procedure to patient.
3. Assist the patient to put on socks and nonskid shoes.
4. Apply gait belt.

Coming to Stand
1. Position the walker in front of the patient.
2. Assist the patient to a standing position by straightening your legs as you lift with the gait belt and the patient pushes down with his hands on the mattress.
3. Patient leans forward and pushes up with arms from the chair arm rest or bed to come to stand.
4. The person assisting should use an underhand grasp on the belt and assist the patient to a standing position.
5. Instruct the patient to position his/her body within the frame of the walker and ask the patient to grasp the hand rests securely.
   a. Check height of walker to ensure hand rests are at the level of the top of the femur and that elbows are flexed at a 250-300 degree angle.

Walking Instructions
1. Instruct the patient to move the walker forward by lifting it up, moving it forward and setting it down. Instruct the patient to position the walker so the back legs of the walker are even with the patient's toes. The patient should avoid sliding the walker.
2. Instruct the patient to take a step forward with the weak leg.
3. Instruct the patient to move his/her strong leg forward.
4. Instruct the patient to take short steps and keep his/her head up and eyes looking forward.
5. Walk the patient the distance instructed by supervisor/nurse as indicated in the plan of care.
6. Repeat steps while walking to the side and slightly behind the patient, alert at all times.

Returning to Sit
1. As the patient approaches the chair (or bed), the patient turns in small circles toward the stronger side.
2. Assist the patient back up to the chair after ambulating until the chair can be felt against the patient's legs.
3. The patient reaches for one arm rest at a time.
4. The patient lowers to the chair in a controlled manner.

AFTER CARE:
1. Remove gait belt and replace equipment.
2. Make sure the patient is comfortable.
3. Use alcohol-based hand rub for hand hygiene.

REFERENCES: