

You Can Get There From Here

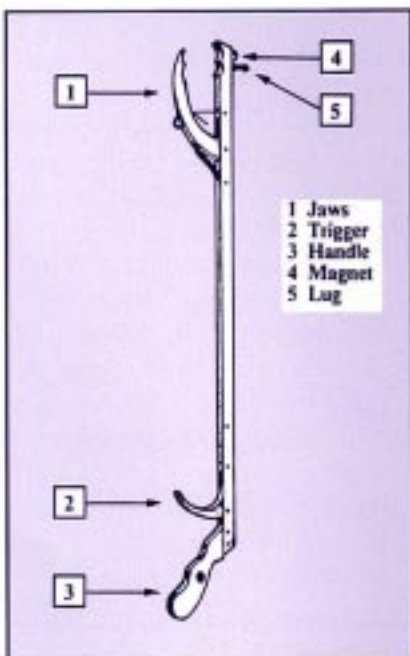
Reaching and mobility aids for independent living

The freedom to move from place to place in your home and out in the community is critical to independence. If you have problems with movement, balance or coordination, there are a number of devices that may help you get around and accomplish everyday activities. This brochure includes information on devices to help with reaching, lifting, and walking.

Reaching Aids

Pushing, pulling, grasping, and turning are movements that can be easier for you with a reaching aid. The models shown here have been designed to cover a wide range of activities and will help people with a weak or painful grip, or a limited range of motion.

The most common reachers consist of a pair of jaws controlled by a trigger mechanism. Made of lightweight aluminum and plastic, they are available in a variety of sizes and lengths. The desk-sized model, about 24" long, is useful for retrieving objects on your desk, kitchen counter, or bedside table. A mid-range length, about 28" long, is useful for everyday activities such as picking up objects from the floor or reaching high storage areas. An extra-long model (32") is also available if you need extended reach. Features you'll find useful include a magnet for catching and holding metal objects, and a projecting lug for pulling things toward you. Folding styles and reachers with toggle (rather than trigger) closing action, swivel heads, or forearm extension are also available.



Prices vary widely, depending on the size and features. Reachers are generally available at most medical supply stores.



Walking Aids

Mobility can be complicated by many factors, such as pain and weakness in the legs or back, uncertain balance or dizziness, muscular tremors or spasms, or paralysis. There are a variety of changes in your environment, as well as canes and walkers, that can enhance your mobility in and out of your home.



Modify Your Home

- ✓ Install grab bars in critical locations.
- ✓ Remove small rugs; avoid shag carpeting.
- ✓ Arrange furniture so that you can walk from solid piece to solid piece, using the furniture for support.



Clothing and Footwear

- ✓ Choose pants and tops that do not restrict motion, and do not trail behind.
- ✓ Choose shoes with textures soles for better grip.
- ✓ Removable cleats can give you better footing on ice or snow.

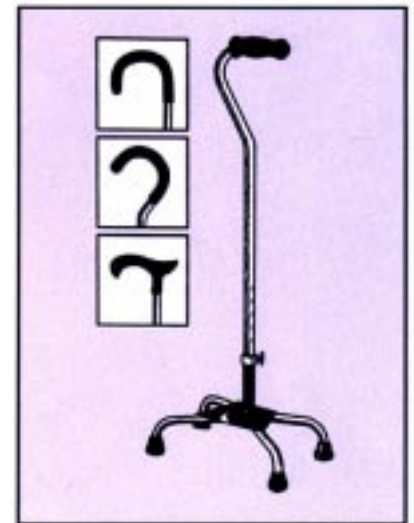


Canes

Although canes can be purchased at many drugstores, you should consult with your doctor if you are having frequent or pronounced periods of weakness, dizziness, or poor coordination.

Consider the following factors in selecting a cane:

- ✓ **Height:** The handle should be at the height of your hip joint.
- ✓ **Weight:** You should have no trouble lifting it.
- ✓ **Handle:** The grip should be comfortable and secure.
- ✓ **Base:** Canes are available with single tips, or 4-legged, wide bases.



Other options available include a loop on the handle of the cane, to free your hands for other activities, and a fold-down ice gripping tip, which can be attached to the side of the cane.



Walkers

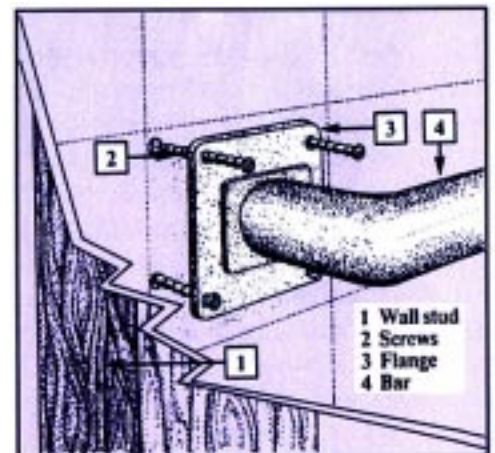
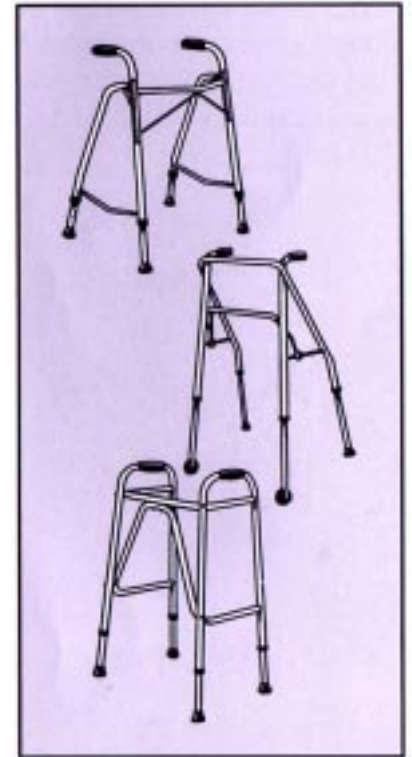
The walker is particularly useful for individuals with balance problems since it affords support through both arms at a fixed distance. Walkers come in a wide range of heights and weights, with a variety of handle styles. Ask your doctor or physical therapist for help in making a selection.



Grab Bars

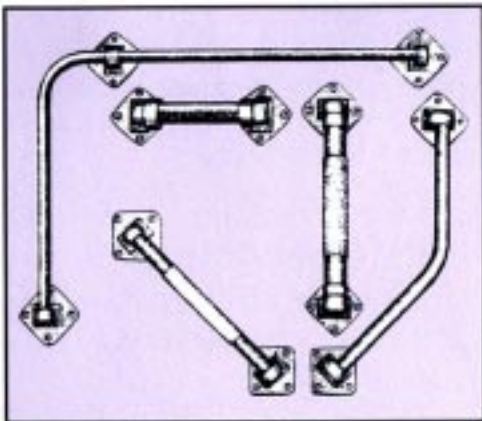
Grab bars make the most of your strength by giving you extra support when and where you need it, such as climbing in and out of the bathtub, your bed, or negotiating a flight of stairs.

A grab bar looks like a towel rack, but that's where the similarity ends. A grab bar is designed to be strong enough to support your weight and more. Flanges on the ends of the bar have sturdy screws for installation, preferably into wall studs. There is room between the bar and the wall for you to get a good grip, and the diameter of the bar will feel solid in your hand. Made of plastic or rust-resistant metal, the bar may have a rough surface to prevent slipping. Many shapes and sizes are available for different uses; most are wall-mounted, but some attach to the edge of your bathtub.



Some considerations in selecting a grab bar:

- ✓ Evaluate your physical abilities; choose a bar and a location which lets you use your strongest muscles most effectively.
- ✓ Make sure the bar you select is long enough to carry a movement through to its conclusion; if you run out of support before you're fully standing, you could lose momentum and fall back, or fall forward from too much force.
- ✓ An occupational therapist can help you with decisions about where to place what kind of bar.



Some shapes and sizes of grab bars are illustrated here. They can be purchased at plumbing supply outlets, some department and hardware stores, and at medical/surgical supply stores. If you can't find one to suit your needs, some companies will custom design a bar for a somewhat higher price. Alternatively, you may be able to combine standard bars in sequence to give you the support you need.



Further Information

For more information, please contact:

Iowa COMPASS

Center for Disabilities and Development
100 Hawkins Drive S295
Iowa City, Iowa 52242-1011

800-779-2001 (voice)

877-686-0032 (TTY)

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