

# Changes in Walking Ability

Will I keep my ability to walk or transfer as I get older? Changes in ability to walk or transfer with age depends on your diagnosis, what you can do and how you and those supporting you have managed your disability. Everyone's journey is different.

## Things to consider

- People with hemiplegia are less likely to lose their independent walking, while those with spastic diplegia or choreoathetosis are more likely to
- There is a commonly recognised change in walking at around 20 to 25 years of age, generally due to increased bending of the knees when walking and increased difficulties keeping up with peers
- A second commonly recognised change in walking or transfer ability occurs between 40 to 45 years of age, when pain and fatigue make it harder to complete activities, likely due to large stresses on the joints over time
- Increasing weight of the body with age can cause stress during movement
- A lack of physical activity can reduce movement ability and increase pain and fatigue

- Long-term stress on the body can increase pain and fatigue later in life
- Use of equipment and assistive technology is not 'the end of the line' – using a wheelchair, scooter or walker does not always mean a complete loss of independent walking or transfer ability

## Steps to maintain walking or transfer abilities

- Protection of joints from early on in life
- Possible surgery in the teen or early adult years to assist the movement of muscles and joints
- The use of mobility aids to ease joint stress
- Maintenance of a healthy weight range
- Addressing pain early - finding the cause and taking steps to minimise any impact
- Seeking advice and support for consistent tiredness or fatigue

- Regular physiotherapy and occupational therapy reviews to monitor mobility and ability to complete activities. These may assist by:
  - Assisting you to find ways to manage and reduce pain and fatigue
  - Reviewing daily activities and tasks to make things easier and safer, and to prevent further problems
  - Providing an exercise or therapy program
  - Providing walking and transfer training
  - Prescribing equipment such as wheelchairs, transfer aids or walking aids
  - Providing recommendations about support needs based on ability levels

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