CARE Compass

Helping Navigate the Later Stages of Dementia



How to use a Gait Belt

Sanders-Brown
Center on Aging

This project was made possible by a generous gift.

The goal of the program is to help provide tools and information so that you can navigate the later stages of dementia. We hope that you find these videos and resources to be helpful and encouraging.

This program is designed to be a guide only for the compassionate care and support of your loved one and is not medical advice. If you have questions or concerns, always check with your doctor.

We also want to acknowledge that late stage dementia can look very different person to person. Sometimes ideas we share may not work or only work for a short time. That is okay. No one person is alike and what works today may not work tomorrow we hope to provide tools that can be options for you to try.

This guide contains links and other resources that may not be provided by the presenter but are added to the guide to provide additional information and support.

Gait Belt- A safety device used to transfer a patient from one place to another

How to Put on a Gait Belt

1. Locate the gait belt.
Make sure the belt is in good condition and ready to use.

2. Explain what you are going to do.
Approach your loved one calmly, make eye contact, and explain in simple, reassuring words. "*I'm going to put this belt around your waist to help you stand up safely*."

3. Position the belt.
Place the belt snugly around your loved one's waist, above the hips and over clothing. Keep the buckle at the front and the belt's tag facing inward, toward the person.

4. Thread the belt through the buckle.
Feed the end of the belt behind the buckle, then bring the metal tip forward over the metal teeth and through the opposite side of the buckle.

5. Tighten the belt.
Pull the metal tip completely through the buckle. Remove any extra slack so the belt fits securely without being too tight. You should be able to slide your fingers between the belt and your loved one's body.

6. Check for comfort.
Watch your loved one's facial expressions, body movements, and other nonverbal signs of discomfort. Ask, "Does this feel comfortable?" If they have difficulty answering, look for signs of pain, fear, or distress.

7. Secure the loose end.
Tuck the remaining end of the belt through the belt loop or underneath the secured portion of the belt so it does not hang loose.

8. Position yourself for the transfer.
Stand close to your loved one and maintain a stable stance. From behind

or slightly to the side, grasp the belt securely from underneath, keeping your fingers pointed upward.

9. Prepare to move together.
Explain the next step before beginning. Use a calm voice and simple directions, such as “Let’s stand up together.” Give your loved one time to respond and participate as much as possible.

10. Transfer safely.
Follow the transfer technique you have been trained to use. Do not pull your loved one up by their arms or use the gait belt to lift their full body weight.

How to fasten a gait belt

Place the belt with the buckle in front of the person’s mid section, tooth side facing outward. Over their clothes.



Feed the metal tipped end of the belt through the buckle opening.



Pull through to secure the belt snugly around the waist.



Important safety reminders

Use a gait belt only when appropriate. Check with a healthcare professional if your loved one has a recent abdominal or back surgery, a feeding tube, a painful injury, or another condition that may make belt use unsafe.

A gait belt is for support, not lifting. It does not prevent every fall and should not replace proper transfer training.

Adapt your communication. A person with dementia may feel confused or frightened. Explain one step at a time, demonstrate when helpful, and pause if they become distressed.

Know when to get help. If your loved one cannot safely bear weight, becomes suddenly weak, or needs more assistance than you can safely provide, do not attempt the transfer alone.

Additional Resources:

Consortia Advancing Standards in Research Administration Information- What is a Gait Belt?

https://casrai.org/guides/what-is-a-gait-belt

American Nurse Today- Safety Options- Gait Belt

https://www.myamericannurse.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/ant5-Focus-Safety-Options-gait-belts-425.pdf#:~:text=Gait%20belts%2C%20which%20typically%20are,protect%20themselves%20and%20their%20pa%2D

National Institute on Aging- Care in the Last Stages of Alzheimer's Disease

https://www.nia.nih.gov/health/alzheimers-caregiving/care-last-stages-alzheimers-disease