

White Paper (Summary): Busting Walker Myths

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Busted Myth # 1:

“Long term use of walkers is normal”

- ▶ Myth fueled because of ubiquitous sights of older adults with walkers.
- ▶ Like crutches, walkers were designed for short term use only.
- ▶ If a previously fit professional athlete was using crutches for months at a time, we would think something was wrong. The same view should be held for older adults.
- ▶ Using a walker indicates rehabilitation is not complete.
- ▶ Needing a walker is a sign of leg weakness.
- ▶ After time, the use of the walker causes back muscles to weaken, and detrimental posture changes develop.
- ▶ The answer is to correct complete rehabilitation by strengthening the individual and improving their balance

Busted Myth # 2:

“Using a walker is fine for those with memory loss”

- ▶ If an older adult has created a dependency on using a walker for mobility, they are at a **severe** risk of falling when they **forget** to use it.
- ▶ Reduce the risk. Strengthen the individual, improve their balance, and wean them off their walker.

Busted Myth #3

“Using a walker reduces risk of falling”

- ▶ Walkers can be a necessary assistive device, but are designed for temporary use.
- ▶ Walkers are initially given out:
 - » During acute rehab following surgery
 - » When older adult complains of fear of falling
 - » Reports of being unsteady on feet
- ▶ Prolonged use (greater than 6 weeks) creates dependence
- ▶ Once dependent, risk of falling increases, because the individual becomes afraid of moving without both hands holding onto something to stabilize them.
- ▶ Tasks such as dressing, toileting, brushing teeth, getting a glass of water and preparing meals require a free hand. **After relying on a walker some people forget how to keep their balance when they have only one hand for support. This places them at a high risk of falls.**

By investing in *Tandem Strength and Balance*® an older adult can typically be weaned off a walker in 3 to 6 months



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