



# Reaching and Mobility Aids for Independent Living

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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. Here are suggestions for 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 discussed 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 and drug 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 textured 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 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 you 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 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

Grab bars 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.

## Vendors

adaptability  
P.O. Box 515

Colchester, CT 06415-0515  
800/243-9232



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[www.adaptability.com](http://www.adaptability.com)

Assisted Access, Inc.  
P.O. Box 230  
Lake Villa, IL 60046-0230  
800/950-9655

Can-Do Products  
200 Robbins Lane  
Jericho, NY 11753  
800/537-2118  
[www.independentliving.com](http://www.independentliving.com)

Dr. Leonard's Healthcare  
100 Nixon Lane  
P.O. Box 7821  
Edison, NJ 08818  
800/785-0880  
[www.drleonards.com](http://www.drleonards.com)

Dynamic Living  
428 Hayden Station Road  
Windsor, CT 06095  
888/940-0605  
[www.dynamic-living.com](http://www.dynamic-living.com)

Gold Violin  
P.O. Box 261639  
San Diego, CA 92196  
877/648-8465  
[www.goldviolin.com](http://www.goldviolin.com)

Independent Living Aids, Inc.  
27 E. Mall  
Plainview, NY 11803  
800/537-2118  
[www.independentliving.com](http://www.independentliving.com)

LS & S Group, Inc.  
P.O. Box 673  
Northbrook, IL 60065  
800/468-4789  
[www.lssgroup.com](http://www.lssgroup.com)

Maddak, Inc./Ableware  
Pequannock, NJ 07440  
201/628-7600

Maxi-Aids  
P. O. Box 3209  
Farmingdale, NY 11735  
800/522-6294  
[www.maxiaids.com](http://www.maxiaids.com)

Medical Home Supply  
111 W. Evans Ave., #A  
Denver, CO 80223  
1-800-873-8385  
303/762-1263

Mountain Aire Medical Supply, Inc.  
2490 Patterson, Suite 5  
Grand Junction, CO 81505  
800/578-8986

Mountain View Medical Supply  
5370 Sheridan Blvd.  
Arvada, CO 80002  
303/455-1300

Pathways HomeCare Center  
1500 West Littleton Blvd., Unit #127  
Littleton, CO 80120



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303-798-5588

[www.pathwayshomecare.org](http://www.pathwayshomecare.org)

RCC Medical Supply  
830 Lashley St., Suite B  
Longmont, CO 80501  
303/682-0100

Rolyan Ability One  
P.O. Box 1005  
N104 W13400 Donges Bay Road  
Germantown, WI 53022  
800/558-8633  
[www.rolyan.com](http://www.rolyan.com)

Roth Medical  
5345 Arapahoe, #1

Boulder, CO 80303  
303/442-2116

Sammons Preston  
4 Sammons Court  
Bolingbrook, IL 60440  
800/323-5547  
[www.sammonspreston.com](http://www.sammonspreston.com)

Youcan Toocan  
2223 S. Monaco Parkway  
Denver, CO 80222  
303/759-9525  
888/663-9396  
[www.youcantoocan.com](http://www.youcantoocan.com)

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