

Cleaning Canes, Crutches and Walkers

PURPOSE

Although the care required is minimal, users of canes, crutches and walkers need to be alert to circumstances that pose a safety threat.

INDICATION OR FREQUENCY

Cleaning and maintenance should be performed as needed on canes, crutches and walkers. The manufacturer's instructions should be followed if they are available.

BASIC PROCEDURES

Cleaning will require the following tools and supplies:

- Commercial alcohol or anti-bacterial wipes
- Clean cloths or disposable wipes
- Warm water
- Mild detergent
- Tweezers or pick

The person cleaning and sanitizing the mobility devices should follow the handwashing hygiene instructions before beginning, and should wear disposable gloves to minimize the risk of infection. Some microorganisms are capable of surviving on solid surfaces for several days.

All disinfecting should be done in a designated area that restricts the exposure of others. The person performing the cleaning procedures may wish to wear a mask to avoid inhaling particulate from cleaning or odors from the cleaning chemicals.

These preliminary steps in cleaning are a prelude to repair. If problems are identified, a qualified service person should check the device and make necessary repairs before cleaning is completed.

To clean metal frames, a solution of mild detergent should be mixed in water. A cloth should be dampened and the water wrung from it. The metal frame and any metal attachments should be wiped. All surfaces should be wiped thoroughly. After wiping, the objects should be allowed to air dry completely (at least 10 minutes) before permitting anything to come into contact with the sanitized surfaces.

Canes and Crutches

Dust and dirt should be brushed or wiped from the walking cane with a cloth or disposable towel. While cleaning, the technician should pay attention to broken bits, nicks and scratches. Scratches or dents that are sharp may catch on objects and cause damage, or may scratch the user. If the rubber tips have gotten very dirty, they should be removed and washed in soapy water, then dried carefully with a cloth before being replaced on the cane or crutch. It is important to watch for damage to the rubber tips at the bottom of the cane or crutch. If the rubber tips have serious splits or damage, they may require replacement. The handles should be checked to ensure that they are not loose or broken. A loose handle is a serious risk to stability. If the cane or crutch is extendable, the technician should ensure that all snap buttons release and re-engage properly.

Walkers

The same general care instructions for canes and crutches also apply to walkers, but those with wheels pose some additional concerns. In addition to cleaning supplies, the technician may need a pick or tweezers to use in cleaning debris from the wheels. The wheels should be checked for hair, string and debris that is so easily picked up by the wheels and trapped in the casters. If this is allowed to accumulate, it keeps the wheels from functioning properly and poses a safety risk.

If the walker has slides or tennis balls on the rear legs, they should be checked to ensure that they remain securely attached and that no debris has accumulated.

The entire walker should be wiped with a damp cloth.

HUBSCRUB USE: Generally, the HUBSCRUB is reserved for cleaning manual wheelchairs, and may be in use for extended periods of time during a work session. Walkers, canes and crutches are usually sanitized by the process outline above. However, if the HUBSCRUB is available, folding walkers and other metal devices may be cleaned and sanitized in the HUBSCRUB. Crutches with any type of padding should not be cleaned in the HUBSCRUB. Tennis balls on walkers should be removed prior to cleaning in the HUBSCRUB. The HUBSCRUB Captain will be familiar with the needed cycles and will supervise the activity.