



HMD Fact Sheet

March 2017

Persons with a hidden mobility disability (HMD) are independently mobile but can only walk a short distance or stand unsupported for a brief time without serious health consequences.

Over 2 million Americans & Canadians have HMD.

While HMD is more frequent with aging, people of all ages have HMD and the consequences are similar for all ages.

Comfortable distance to walk unaided:

35 feet is walkable for most [“short distance”]

70 feet is walkable for 56%

Walking is more effortful on slopes, unstable or uneven ground (like grass), going up/down stairs.

Comfortable time to stand unaided:

1-2 minutes is possible for most [“brief time”]

5 minutes is possible for 66%

Common health conditions resulting in HMD:

- Arthritis
- Asthma
- Back, disc, vertebrae problems
- Chronic fatigue syndrome
- COPD (chronic obstructive pulmonary disease)
- Diabetes
- Ehlers-Danlos syndrome
- Fibromyalgia
- Heart disease
- Hip or knee injuries
- Multiple sclerosis
- Myasthenia gravis
- Neuropathy
- Parkinson’s disease
- Stroke

Reactions to a person with HMD walking slowly:

45% Ignored, as though invisible

30% Asked if the person needed help

20% Treated with anger or irritation

Consequences of walking too far:

76% Increased joint pain

52% Walk more slowly until almost not moving

45% Increased difficulty breathing

42% Have trouble walking at all the next day

39% Begin to stagger and lose balance

31% Become immobilized by pain

27% Increased muscle spasms

21% can’t use anti-inflammatories to manage pain.

Difficulties in community life:

83% Attending events where everyone stands

78% Having to stand in line for service

76% Shopping at a supermarket or mall

55% Using public transportation

43% Entering buildings with parking 35 ft. away

42% Check-in counter 35+ ft. from entrance

Self-advocacy:

- Resist walking further than comfortable
- Ask to sit down for service
- Ask for wheelchair assistance in airports
- Pause frequently to sit and recuperate

Examples of how to improve accessibility:

- Assume “short distance” means 35 feet
- Ensure horizontal, smooth, stable walkway
- Replace waiting lines with numbers
- Provide seated options for service
- Provide seating while waiting for elevators
- Provide seating in building lobbies near doors
- Provide seating every 35 ft. in long corridors
- Hold seated public consultations
- Provide public parking within 35 feet
- Place disabled parking within 20 ft. of elevator

For more information on HMD: www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com

This Fact Sheet is based on results from the *Survey on Hidden Mobility Disabilities*, January-March 2017, which are reliable within ± 4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. For a copy of the full research report:

www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com/research-report/.