



HMD Fact Sheet

October 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 61%

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:

35% Ignored, as though invisible

27% Asked if the person needed help

17% Treated with anger or irritation

Consequences of walking too far:

77% Increased joint pain

52% Walk more slowly until almost not moving

46% Increased difficulty breathing

43% Have trouble walking at all the next day

40% Begin to stagger and lose balance

31% Become immobilized by pain

29% Increased muscle spasms

22% can’t use anti-inflammatories to manage pain.

Difficulties in community life:

85% Attending events where everyone stands

80% Having to stand in line for service

77% Shopping at a supermarket or mall

55% Using public transportation

44% Entering buildings with parking 35 ft. away

44% Check-in counter 35+ ft. from entrance

Additional findings:

- Persons under 55 are *more* likely to have difficulty walking & standing than 55+
- Males are more likely to have HMD related to heart disease than only to arthritis

Self-advocacy:

- Resist walking further than comfortable
- Ask to sit down for service
- Ration your time standing
- Ask for wheelchair assistance in airports

Examples of how to improve accessibility:

- Replace waiting lines with numbers
- Provide seated options for service
- Provide seating in building lobbies near doors
- Hold seated public consultations

For more information on HMD: www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com

This Fact Sheet is based on results from the *Survey on Hidden Mobility Disabilities*, January-September 2017, which are reliable within ± 3.4 percent at the 95 percent confidence level. For a copy of the full research report:

www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com/research-report/.