



ABLEDATA, Your Source for Assistive Technology Information

Standing Aids

ABLEDATA Fact Sheet

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Introduction

People rarely think about ability to stand and how it affects their daily lives. Standing is an alternative to sitting. It gives us greater access to social, vocational, and recreational activities. It improves the body's physiological functioning. Many people who are unable to stand without assistance use wheelchairs for positioning and mobility. But another option is devices that can help a person rise to a passive standing position and maintain it. The right standing aid may also be more cost effective than customizing a job site or home because one of its primary functions is to assist people in adapting to their surroundings.



The powered version of the Lifestand

There is a vast array of standing devices to choose from. They offer users a variety of positions, provide varying amounts and placement of supports, and enhance people's functioning in many ways and many places. With some standing devices, another person has to help the user get into an upright position. Other devices help a person rise to a standing position with no other aid. Some devices allow a person to move upright from place to place with either manual or powered propulsion. Others are stationary. Most standing aids can be adjusted for growth or changes in physical condition; most can be used by more than one person. Some devices are fairly simple, built out of plywood with foam support pads that can easily be constructed by a handy relative or friend. Others are complicated, heavy, expensive product made with high technology.

Note: This Fact Sheet will mention or describe several standing aids (also called standers) to illustrate the features of general types. References to any product do not constitute a recommendation or endorsement of that product by ABLEDATA or the U.S. Department of Education. We encourage you to be a smart consumer. Try to find out as much as you can about the standing aids that might fit your needs, and be an active participant in the selection of any product that you use.

Considerations in Selecting Standing Aids

To determine what device a person needs and can use requires careful evaluation by clinical professionals, including a physical or occupational therapist and the person's physician. They will take into account the person's age, abilities, and disabilities to calculate how much support the person needs, whether a mobile or a stationary aid would be most beneficial, and what special features or adaptations should be added.

Often manufacturers will give qualified durable medical equipment dealers demonstration models of their products. Frequently, the demonstration models are available for a potential consumer's use on a trial basis.

Components of Standing Aids

The prospective user should definitely participate in the selection process. The user knows the most about the environment and circumstances in which the standing aid will be used. Will it be for play, for school, for the home, for the office, or for various settings? Will it be used indoors or outdoors? Does it need to be transported? If so, how will it be done? The answers to those and other pertinent questions will help determine the most appropriate aid for each person.

Standing aids are available in three basic types: *prone*, *supine*, and *vertical*. All three types of standers share certain components. A list of those basic components, with brief descriptions, appears below:

- **Growth rods for back and torso areas** allow a stander to be adjusted to accommodate changes in the user's height.
- **Back tilt adjustment** increases or decreases the degree of incline.
- **Feet stabilizers** permit proper foot positioning and minimize internal or external hip rotation.
- **Footplates** offer added stability by bearing weight and pressure. They make it easier for users to flex and extend of the ankles (dorsiflexion and plantar flexion).
- **Adjustable chest pads** encourage the user to bear weight on the lower extremities by supplying varying degrees of chest support.
- **Adjustable knee blocks** improve posture by controlling the knees' ability to bend while the user is in a passive standing position.
- **Adjustable head and neck support** serves two purposes, to accommodate changes in growth and to position the head and neck properly.
- **Adjustable torso support and torso tilt knobs** adjust the degree of support and the degree of incline in the user's torso area.

Types of Standing Aids

As mentioned above, there are three categories of standing aids. Each type of stander has its advantages and disadvantages, and it is possible for more than one type of stander to be appropriate for an individual consumer. A discussion of each kind of standing aid—prone, supine, and vertical—follows.

Prone Standers

Prone standers support the front of the body; they lean the user forward at varying angles to keep him/her upright. To further steady the user there are lateral (side) supports as well as posterior straps or pads that hold the feet, knees, buttocks, and trunk in place. The angle at which a user stands can usually be varied. The supports can be adjusted for growth or a change in the user's physical condition.

Some prone standers are freestanding units. Others, called "lean-to standers", are designed to lean against a table or counter. The freestanding units usually have a more stable base, can be placed anywhere in a room regardless of other furniture, and may have small casters for easier movement (though they are not intended to offer mobility outdoors). The lean-to units are usually lighter weight and more portable, but they tip over more easily and must lean against a stable piece of furniture. Most freestanding units include an activity table at arm level, whereas lean-to units rely on a table or counter for a work surface.

One example of the freestanding prone stander is the **Kidstand Prone Standing Frame** designed by Prime Engineering for children who need a prone standing system. Freestanding systems like the Kidstand offer 40 degrees of angled prone positioning for varied weight bearing. They are available in two models, to accommodate different heights. One fits children 28 to 45 inches tall; the other works best

