

HD CLINICAL TIPS: MOVING AND HANDLING

For Physiotherapists and Healthcare Professionals Working with People with HD



People with HD present with many different physical, social and psychological problems that may make it difficult for them to carry out their activities of daily living. However, it is vital that their independence and mobility is maintained for as long as possible and this may require carers, relatives and or therapists to assist them to move. The following is a list of tips for handlers and the person with HD to facilitate independence and help them move more efficiently.



Tips to assist moving and handling a person with HD

Advice	
Take Your Time	<p>People with HD are often slow to start and complete a movement, for example, when standing up from sitting. The time it takes for the brain to instruct the muscles to perform the action is slowed in HD.</p> <p>Therefore they need time and patience to allow them to do as much as possible themselves.</p>
Technique	<p>Using the technique that is most effective for the individual during any task will allow the person with HD to do as much as possible themselves, thereby increasing their independence and reducing the risk for carers.</p>
Verbal Cueing	<p>For some people with HD, counting "1,2,3, Go", or the use of "Ready, Steady, Go" may assist them to start off the movement. Instruction during or just prior to the task may also be helpful to remind the person of the most effective technique. This will require practice overtime.</p>
Manual Cueing	<p>For some people with HD, physical assistance may be required from the handler. This may involve a simple indication of how to achieve the most effective technique or to simply provide a point of stability for balance during the task. Of course the handler should not put themselves at risk while assisting the person with HD to move.</p> <p>N.B. Some people who have choreic movements may actually be hindered by hands-on assistance.</p>

Tips to assist moving and handling a person with HD continued

Advice	
Simple Commands	Use simple short commands to request a task. This is especially true for people with any cognitive/ understanding difficulties.
Practice	The person with HD will benefit from repetition of simple tasks during the day/ week. This is especially true if they have not been doing the task themselves for some time.
Consistency	It is vital that all handlers (therapists, carers, relatives) involved with the person with HD are assisting in the same way. This will increase the amount of practice the person gets and therefore improve their proficiency of the task.
Motivation	Apathy and depression are common symptoms associated with HD and often result in the person lacking the motivation to move regularly. Encouragement to move and positive feedback during and after tasks is important. One way to motivate is to set simple achievable goals that are important to the person with HD. This could involve the completion of a simple task independently, within a set time (e.g., complete 3 sit to stands in 60 seconds), over a set distance (e.g., walk 20 metres in 40 seconds), or may involve a fun element (e.g., hold a tray and balance a tin of beans on the tray while standing up from sitting).
Be Calm and Reassuring	Anxiety and irritability are symptoms of HD. If these symptoms are increased during movement, the handler could try a distraction or simply change the task to avoid the behaviour escalating.
Equipment	Simple pieces of equipment can be very useful in allowing the person with HD to move independently. For example, grab rails and sliding sheets.

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