

6 - Minute Walk test - Protocol

The measure explained

The aim of this measure is to test walking endurance. It is the distance a person can comfortably walk in 6 minutes at their usual walking speed. A length of 30 meters has been shown to provide optimum distance (Ng et al. 2013)

Setting

Physiotherapy department, in a flat area with space to walk a standard distance comfortably.

Equipment required

Stopwatch	Lap counter	2 cones
Straight low traffic corridor	Tape measure – extra long up to 30 meters	Bean bag to act as temporary marker
Chairs	Glass of water	RPE laminate

Method

1. Mark out a standard distance in a straight line with two cones. A distance of 30 metres is ideal.
2. Place a chair at the half way distance and at the cones so that the participant can stop to sit if necessary.
3. With the participant sitting explain the measure:
“We are interested in how far you can comfortably walk in 6 minutes at your usual speed. You can stop and rest as needed. At the end of the 6 minutes we will ask you to rate how much effort you used using a scale which I will show you.” (Show RPE scale diagram).
4. Ask the participant their resting RPE - refer RPE protocol – record the number on case study form.
5. Ask the participant to stand up next to the starting cone.

6. *“Please walk up and down the corridor, around the cones for the next six minutes. Walk at your usual speed and try to walk as far as possible. Use your walking aid as needed (if relevant). If you need to stop and rest tell me and we can sit down. I will walk behind you so as not to affect your usual walking speed. Please start when you are ready”.*
5. The stop watch starts the moment the participant moves their foot in order to take a step.
6. Provide standardised encouragement at 1, 3, 5 minutes
 - “You’re doing a good job”* (minute 1)
 - “You’ve reached halfway”* (minute 3)
 - “You have one minute to go”*(minute 5)
7. The assessor walks behind the participant to minimise the effect of pacing.
8. The assessor records each lap of the walk using the counter.
9. Record number and duration of stop by recording the stop and start time of the break.
10. At the end of 6 minutes the participant is told to stop. The assessor places the temporary marker (beanbag) at the stopping point then helps the participant sit down.
11. Ask the patient to estimate their level of effort during the 6 minute walk using the RPE scale which is shown to them. Refer RPE protocol.
12. Measure and record the distance between last cone and bean bag.
13. Record number of rests, including time stopped and duration of stop.

Recording the distance

The distance from the temporary marker to the last cone is measured and the distance tallied up according to the number of laps recorded on the counter.

Record the patients Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) – refer to RPE protocol