

Guidelines for Use of RPE Scale in 6 minute walk test

Recording the patients Rating of Perceived Exertion

The Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) is the objective measure used in the 6 Minute Walking Test (6MWT). The distance achieved, the 6 Minute Walking Distance (6MWD) has been validated as a general indicator of overall physical performance and mobility for older people (Duncan et al 1993, Harad et al 1999). The RPE is essentially a self-assessment scale to rate breathlessness and fatigue during exercise. Hence it is important that the participant understands how to respond.

- Use the RPE Scale laminate provided to show the participant prior to commencing the 6 minute walk.
- Cover each point in the same order
- Use the explanations given below.
- Ask the participant to rate their RPE before the 6 minute walk and their maximum RPE during the 6 minute walk immediately after the walk.

(Noble and Robertson 1996; Dawes 2001)

1. Firstly explain what the RPE is to the participant

'The RPE (Rating of Perceived Exertion) is a scale of how breathless and fatigued you feel. I am going to ask you about the feelings of effort/breathlessness and tiredness in your legs that you experience before and whilst walking the 6 minutes. I will not ask you the RPE for during the walk until the end of 6 minutes. The 6 minute walk test provides useful information as to how mobile people are.'

2. Anchor Perceptions

Use laminate and point as you explain each level.

'To give you an idea of how to use the scale, I am going to ask you to think first about feelings linked to the easiest exercise you could do, then the most difficult. I would expect 0 to be the feeling you have when you are doing nothing and are resting. One represents exercise that is very light, you would be aware of your breathing or legs nothing more, this might be the sort of feeling you have when you walk a short distance. Level 3 is moderate intensity, but you could continue easily and it is not hard. Level 5 is hard, your legs are becoming more tired and you may be somewhat out of breath, but you do not have to stop. Level 7 is very hard, you are very

tired, you feel you need to stop very soon and you are short of breath. Level 10 is as hard as the most difficult exercise anyone experiences and you cannot continue’.

3. Is there a correct response?

There is no right or wrong answer. You cannot pick the wrong number. The ratings just give an idea of how you feel. In every day life you notice how your body feels and adjust what you do automatically.

4. Questions

Do you have any questions about the scale?

5. Rating before walk

‘I want you to focus on the sensations in your chest and breathing and in both.. Look at this scale and tell me how breathless/tired you are feeling from 0 (nil effort) to 10 (maximum effort) right now’. Record the number on the case study form.

‘Now can you tell me how tired you feel in your legs from 0-10 right now’. Record the number on the case study form.

6. Rating immediately after the 6 minute walk.

Ask the patient to sit on a chair.

‘I want you to focus on the sensations in your chest and breathing and give a rating on the scale of how breathless and tired you felt at their most during the walk. Look at this scale and tell me how breathless you were feeling from 0 (nil effort) to 10 (maximum effort) during the walk.’ Record the number on the case study form.

‘Now can you tell me how tired you felt in your legs whilst walking from 0-10.’ Record the number on the case study form.

References

Dawes, H. (2001). *Perception of fatigue and exertion during a cycling test in brain injured subjects*. London, University of East London.

Noble, B. J. and R. Robertson (1996). *Perceived Exertion*. USA, Human Kinetics.

Ng S*, Yu P, To F, Chung J, Cheung T (2013). *Effect of walkway length and turning direction on the distance covered in the 6-minute walk test among adults over 50 years of age: across-sectional study*. *Physiotherapy* 99:63–70

Rating of Perceived Exertion – RPE Scale

Rating	Description
0	Nothing at all
0.5	Very, very light
1	Very light
2	Fairly light
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat hard
5	Hard
6	
7	Very Hard
8	
9	
10	Very Very Hard (Maximal)