

How to Walk Correctly with Hip Pain Without Using a Walking Aid

The ideal walking pattern without using a walking aid is one in which you engage (use) the gluteal muscles. If you are limping or experiencing significant pain in the hip with each step you may want to consider using a cane. If your balance is significantly worse due to hip pain or weakness you should use a cane or a walker. The use of a cane or walker does not have to be a permanent addition. Often hip pain will calm down with short-term use of a gait aid. In addition, strengthening of the hip muscles can improve overall standing and walking balance. See our video *How to Strengthen a Painful Hip* for exercise suggestions.

How to tell if your gluteal muscles are firing when walking. Place both hands on your butt cheeks and walk forward. When your right foot hits the ground, one should feel a tightening of the gluteal muscle on that side. The same holds true for when the left foot hits the ground (tightening of the left gluteal muscle). If the glutes are not firing adequately, it can often throw off the alignment of your hip which can lead to pain.



Hints to make certain the gluteal muscles are firing:

1. Shorten your stride. With a longer stride you will tend to hit your heel first.



(shorter)

(longer)

2. Hips should be directly over foot at heel strike (not behind).



(directly over)



(behind)

3. Your knee should be unlocked at heel strike (It should have a slight bend) (unlocked)



4. Initial weight-bear through the heel AND arch. Not heel only.



(heel & arch)



(heel)

5. It should feel like you are pushing off on the back foot.

This type of walking pattern can initially be difficult to do, but it will decrease the stress on your hip. Along with the change in walking you may want to perform gluteal pumps for strengthening the glutes.