

Six Minute Walk Test (6MWT)



INSTRUCTIONS

The 6-Minute Walk Test (6MWT) is . It records the maximum distance a person can walk at their own pace on a flat, hard surface in six minutes.

- Procedure: The patient walks back and forth along a measured, standardized flat hallway (typically 30 meters long).
- Pacing: Patients are allowed to slow down, stop, and rest if they become breathless or fatigued, but the timer keeps running.
- Monitoring: Clinicians track heart rate, oxygen saturation (using a pulse oximeter), and the total distance covered.

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Distance: Healthy adults typically walk between 400 and 700 meters.

Minimal Clinically Important Difference (MCID): A change of about 20 to 45 meters in distance is generally considered a meaningful change in a patient's clinical status.

Contraindications:

Resting heart rate > 120 beats / min after 10 minutes rest (relative)
Systolic blood pressure > 180 mm Hg +/- diastolic blood pressure > 100 mm Hg (relative)
Resting SpO₂ < 85% on room air or on prescribed level of supplemental oxygen
Physical disability preventing safe performance

Equipment Required:

- Stopwatch
- Measuring/trundle wheel to measure distance covered
- 30-metre stretch of unimpeded walkway
- Two cones to mark the distance that needs to be covered
- Pulse oximeter for measuring heart rate and SpO₂ (optional)
- Borg Breathlessness Scale (optional)

Set-Up:

Place cones at either end of the 30 metre stretch as turning points

- Have chairs set up either side and halfway along the walking stretch
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Patient Instructions:

"The object of this test is to walk as far as possible for 6 minutes. You will walk back and forth in this hallway. Six minutes is a long time to walk, so you will be exerting yourself. You will probably get out of breath or become exhausted.

You are permitted to slow down, to stop, and to rest as necessary. You may lean against the wall while resting, but resume walking as soon as you are able.

You will be walking back and forth around the cones. You should pivot briskly around the cones and continue back the other way without hesitation.

Now I'm going to show you.

Please watch the way I turn without hesitation."

Read this standardised encouragement during the test:

- After the 1st minute: "You are doing well. You have 5 minutes to go."
- When the timer shows 4 minutes remaining: "Keep up the good work. You have 4 minutes to go."
- When the timer shows 3 minutes remaining: "You are doing well. You are halfway done."
- When the timer shows 2 minutes remaining: "Keep up the good work. You have only 2 minutes left."
- When the timer shows 1 minute remaining: "You are doing well. You only have 1 minute to go."
- With 15 seconds to go: "In a moment I'm going to tell you to stop. When I do, just stop right where you are and I will come to you."
At 6 minutes: "Stop"
- If the participant stops at any time prior, you can say: "You can lean against the wall if you would like; then continue walking whenever you feel able."
- Do not use other words of encouragement (or body language) to influence the patient's walking speed.
- Accompany the participant along the walking course, but keep just behind them. Do not lead them.
- If available record the distance at which the oxygen saturation drops < 88%