

DROP-ARM COMMODE

Purpose

The purpose of a bedside commode is to provide toileting facilities at the bedside. Other uses of the bedside commode include being used as safety rails for the home toilet and being used as a raised toilet seat; because a bedside commode can be used for these three purposes, it is often called a 3-in-1 or all-in-one commode. By bringing the commode closer to the bed, people with mobility limitations have less distance to travel, and this can facilitate independent use. Physically challenged individuals should never be left unattended while using a bedside commode. If you have not seen a therapist or physician in regards to your mobility limitations, we recommend that you do so.

Types

Bedside commodes come in two different types: standard and drop-arm models. This education sheet will discuss the drop-arm commode type. Drop-arm commodes consist of a metal or rigid frame that has a toilet seat connected to the top. The toilet seat lifts up and a collection bucket is inserted to collect elimination waste. The armrests can be lowered by releasing a latch. The dropping arm is designed to move out of the way for assisting in transferring on and off the commode. There are special versions that are padded or have special cutouts that can be special ordered. Each drop-arm commode is different so make sure you read and understand all manufacturers' operating instructions.

All drop-arm commodes have a maximum weight limit that they can support. It is important to understand the limits and capacities of your commode:

Weight of user (stated by user) is _____ pounds.
Maximum weight capacity of drop-arm commode is _____ pounds.

Use

The first thing that must be set on your drop-arm commode is the height. The height should be adjusted so the user can safely transfer into and out of the commode. The height of the commode seat should be adjusted to the same height of the transferring device. The height can be adjusted by pressing the spring buttons on the legs. Select the desired height and make sure all four legs are adjusted to the same height and that all spring buttons are properly seated in their holes.

Most commodes have slip-resistant rubber or plastic feet; these feet are not slip-proof and need to be kept clean and in good condition. When utilizing the commode the user should exercise care, discretion, and common sense. If using independently, the user must be able to stand, pivot, and sit safely. When sitting, make sure the commode seat is in the down position and adjust your sitting position so that you sit down on the middle of the commode seat. When getting on and off the commode the armrests can be used for support; your downward force should be balanced on both armrests. The armrests are designed for support only and are not engineered to support the entire weight of the user.

Your commode can also be used as a raised toilet seat or safety rails by removing the commode bucket and placing it over a standard toilet.

Safety

The safe use of a drop-arm commode requires it to be used as instructed, which includes the following safety precautions:

- Ensure that all screws, nuts, and bolts are tight at all times.
- Ensure that all four leg extensions are adjusted to the same height and are all in contact with the floor at all times.
- Inspect the rubber or plastic tips on the leg extensions for rips, tears, cracks, wear, or to see if they are missing. Replace them immediately if any of these conditions exist.
- Never leave a disoriented or physically challenged individual unattended.
- Never put your full weight on the arm supports.
- Never sit on the drop-arm commode without the commode seat down.

In order to ensure care and provide operator safety, make sure you follow these safety guidelines:

- Use nightlights to increase vision around areas of use.
- Wipe up any water or slippery floor spills.
- Remove tripping hazards (loose floorboards, uneven floors, throw rugs, extension cords, clutter, etc.)
- Install grab bars and use bath mats with suction cups to prevent falls.
- Do not use a drop-arm commode without assistance when taking any medications that may cause dizziness, drowsiness, and/or unsteadiness.

Maintenance

To keep the drop-arm commode clean, wipe it down periodically with a damp cloth. Make sure the armrests are undamaged and secure. The armrests are very important and should be inspected regularly for movement or cracking and replaced if damaged. Replace the commode bucket, splashguard, or rubber tips when worn or cracked.