

## **How Far Can You Walk?** **Hidden Mobility Disabilities Alliance**

Are you able to walk, but just not very far? Do you suddenly experience severe joint pain or shortness of breath when you walk more than 35 feet (approximately the length of a standard school bus)? If you have to stand in line, do you become almost immobilized by pain after a few minutes?

**Hidden mobility disabilities (HMD)** – the ability to walk only short distances or stand unsupported only a brief time without significant health consequences – are truly invisible. The disability is “hidden” because persons with HMD *can* walk and so they look “just fine.” Millions of people with osteoarthritis (or other health conditions like COPD or heart disease) have this mobility limitation, which has the added challenge of the manageable distance varying day to day depending on one’s general health and level of exhaustion.

People with HMD are often embarrassed about claiming a disability because, after all, they *can* walk – some. They may become shy about saying that the “short distance” being indicated is too far away to walk comfortably. Who hasn’t given in to the flight attendant who says, “It’s only a short walk up the jet way,” or the mechanic who says, “Your car is just over there” (when the distance is actually 100-200 feet, much further than one can walk without difficulty)? But experience shows that when one pushes oneself to walk or stand past one’s comfort zone, it can take hours (or days) to recover from the resulting pain and inflammation.

The **Hidden Mobility Disabilities Alliance (HMDA)** helps people with strategies to stay mobile in a healthy way and works to raise public awareness about “distance to be walked” or “time standing” as access barriers to full participation in community life. Check out the information and resources at [www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com](http://www.HiddenMobilityDisabilities.com) .