



Section On
Geriatrics
American Physical Therapy Association

This brochure was developed through a coordinated project with the Section of the American Physical Therapy Association. Student physical therapists and student physical therapist assistants were invited to create educational brochures for the Section's consumer focus.

The Section on Geriatrics applauds the efforts of:

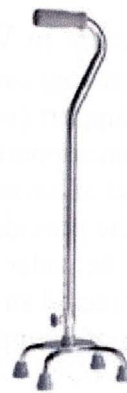
Jennifer Skutta, SPT
University of Illinois at Chicago

WALKING MADE SIMPLER:

Walking Canes



Standard
Cane



Quad
Cane



Hemi-Walker

What you should know.....

- 8-19% of community dwelling older adults are affected by gait* disorders and require ambulatory* devices to walk.
- Ambulatory Devices, including canes, can help improve balance, decrease risk of falls, decrease pain caused by weight bearing, improve mobility throughout the community, and improve energy expenditure, if used properly.

Different Types of Canes:

- **Standard Cane:** Usually adjustable height, provides one additional point of contact with ground, but not meant for weight bearing
- **Quad Cane:** Adjustable height, provides four additional points of contact with ground, allows for more weight bearing
- **Offset Cane:** Adjustable height, provides one additional point of contact with ground, allows for slight weight bearing
- **Hemi-Walker:** Adjustable height, provides four additional points of contact with ground, allows for continuous weight bearing through one side



Offset Cane

How Canes can Assist in Walking

Using a cane while walking can increase an individual's base of support (which refers to the area on the ground that supports an individual's body weight). Instead of having one or two feet on the ground, the cane provides additional point(s) of contact. The wider the base of support, the more protected an individual is from falling while walking, if used properly.

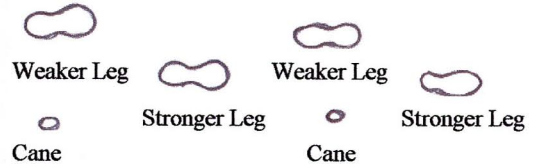
Fitting an Adjustable Cane to Fit You

1. Wear your usual walking shoes
2. Stand up straight
3. Allow arms to hang naturally at side
4. Adjust the cane height so that the handle of the cane will be in line with the wrist

*Gait/Ambulatory: Walking

How to Walk with a Cane

Place cane in the hand opposite from the leg that is weaker. When walking, advance the cane with leg that is weaker. Next, advance the leg that is stronger. Repeat pattern above.



How to Get Out of a Chair with a Cane (With the cane positioned on the chair arm opposite from the leg that is weaker)

- Use both arms to push up from the chair
- Once standing, put cane in appropriate hand

How to go Up Stairs with a Cane

(With the cane in the opposite hand from the railing)

- First, advance the leg that is stronger up the step. Next, advance the leg that is weaker together with the cane. Repeat.

How to go Down Stairs with a Cane

(With the cane in the opposite hand from the railing)

- First, advance the cane down the step followed by the leg that is weaker. Next, advance the leg that is stronger. Repeat.

Physical Therapy and You

Please consult a physical therapist prior to using a cane or any other ambulatory device to be properly advised on its usage. Inappropriate usage of canes can cause an increased risk of falls.

Individuals with decreased arm strength, impaired vision, impaired judgment, cognitive impairments and decreased endurance may be advised not to use a cane. Please consult a Physical Therapist for further details.

Van Hook FW, et al. Ambulatory devices for chronic gait disorders in the elderly. Am Fam Physician 2003;67(8):1717-24.