

Integrated Regional Falls Program



North Simcoe Muskoka LHIN

Choosing and Using a Cane

Do you feel unsteady when you walk? A cane can improve your balance as you walk or help you compensate for an injury or disability. A cane can give you more confidence in your abilities, which will help you enjoy life and your independence. Following are some tips in finding a cane that will meet your needs.

Types of Canes

If you need the cane only for balance, consider a standard cane with a single tip. For more complex conditions please consult with a physiotherapist or occupational therapist.



Selecting a grip

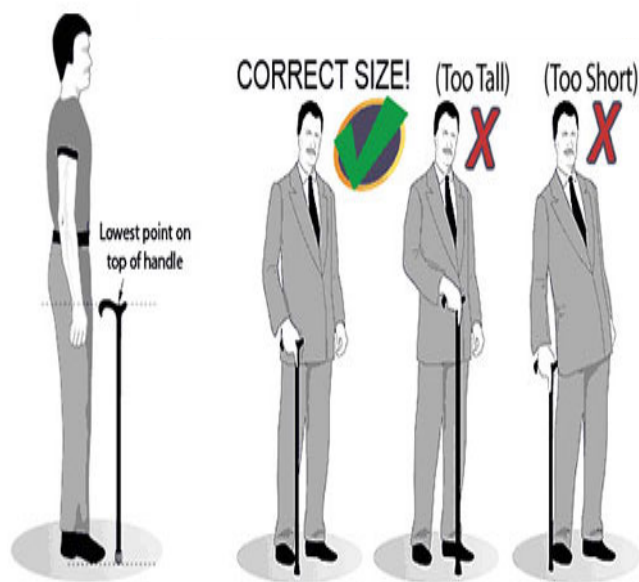
Choosing a grip is often one of personal preference. There are foam grips and grips that are shaped to fit your hand. If you have trouble grasping with your fingers, because of arthritis or pain, you may prefer a larger grip. The correct grip will relieve unnecessary stress on your joints and help prevent joint deformities. Numbness or pain in your hand or fingers may indicate that your cane's grip isn't a good fit for your hand. A physical therapist can help you choose the best grip for your particular situation.

Checking the fit

Many canes are adjustable, but some are not. Make sure your cane fits you properly!

- **Check your elbow bend.** With the cane in your hand, your elbow should bend at a comfortable angle, about 15 degrees. You might bend your elbow slightly more if you're primarily using the cane for balance.
- **Check your wrist height.** With your arm hanging straight down at your side, the top of your cane should line up with the crease in your wrist.

If your cane is too long, you'll need to work harder to pick it up and move it. If your cane is too short, you might lean to one side — which can throw you off balance.



Checking the tip

The pliable rubber tip on the end of a cane grips the floor much like the tread on car tires grips the road. The tip of your cane can help provide traction on most surfaces. Make sure the rubber tip is supple and the tread is in good shape. If the tip looks worn, buy a replacement tip at a pharmacy or medical supply store. Attach an ice pick during the winter months.



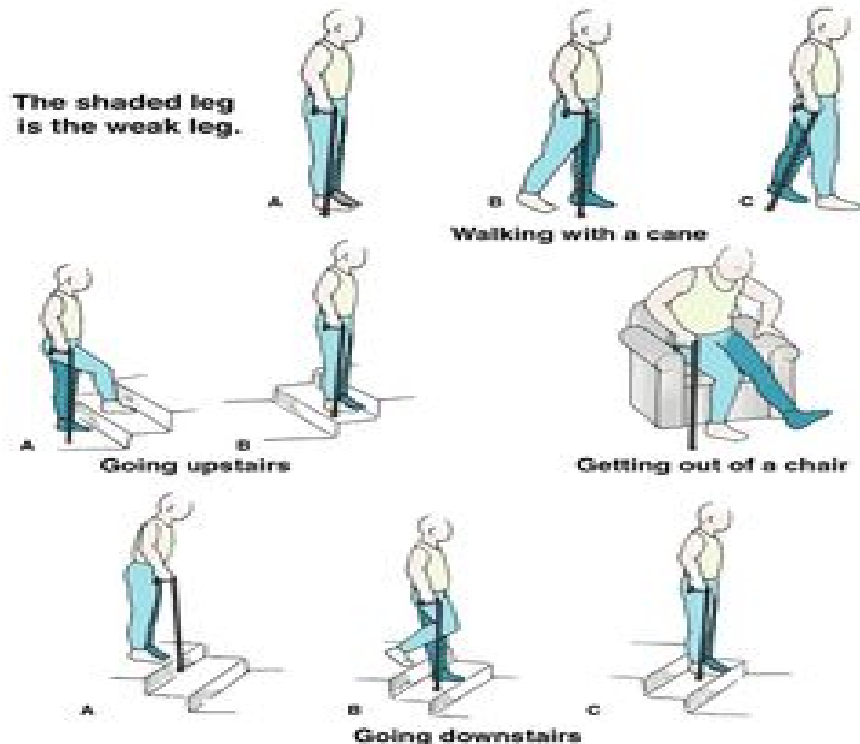
Walking With a Cane

Stepping with the affected leg

If you use a cane for stability, you may grip it in either hand — whichever feels most comfortable. Pick up and move your cane together with the opposite leg. Bring your cane as far forward as your foot.

Using the cane on steps

Be careful when using steps with a cane. If you have an injury or disability affecting one leg, grasp the railing, if possible, and step up with your “good” leg first. Then step up with your other leg as you move the cane. To move down steps, put your cane on the lower step first, then your “weak” leg and then your other leg, which carries your body weight.



References

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