

How to use a cane

Why do I need to use a cane?

Your doctor or physical therapist will explain to you why it is important for you to use a cane. These are the most common reasons to use a cane:

- To relieve pain
- To help with balance by spreading weight over a wider area
- To provide support when muscles are weak
- To keep you safe when there is loss of feeling in the leg
- To increase weight bearing
- To help your body heal

Canes are generally used when a little support is needed for balance or for weakness. You will probably be the most independent and comfortable if you hold the cane in the opposite hand from the affected leg; but if you are trying to increase weight bearing to one leg, then hold the cane in the hand on the same side as the affected leg.

Does your cane fit?

Firmly grasp the top of the cane with your index finger pointing down the length of the cane. Place the cane tip 2 inches in front of your foot and 6 inches to the side. The cane fits if:

- Your wrist hits the handgrip when your arms are hanging at your side.
- Your arm bends slightly at the elbow when you hold the handgrip.



This document is not intended to take the place of the care and attention of your personal physician or other professional medical services. Our aim is to promote active participation in your care and treatment by providing information and education. Questions about individual health concerns or specific treatment options should be discussed with your physician.

Do you know... continued

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Walking with your cane

1. Put all of your weight on the strongest side. Get your balance. Move the cane and the strongest leg forward.
2. With your weight supported on both your cane and your strongest leg, step through with your weakest leg.

Precautions

- Watch out for wet surfaces and objects in your way. These can cause falls.
- Use nonskid rubber tips to keep from slipping. Replace the rubber tip if it is worn. Use a large tip to increase safety.
- Keep the cane away from your feet so you don't trip.

Using stairs and curbs

- Going up: Step with the stronger leg first, then with the cane and the weaker leg.
- Going down: step with the weaker leg and cane first, then with your stronger leg.

Questions?

If you have more questions about how to use a cane, call Rehabilitation Services at 595-3621. If you are inside the hospital, dial 3621. If you are outside the Memphis area, call toll-free 1-866-2ST-JUDE (1-866-278-5833), extension 3621.

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