

Prevent falls and
maintain your independence:

Use a cane!

Protecting yourself from a fall is important to maintain a healthy and independent lifestyle. The following information will help you learn more about the benefits of using a cane, and what to look for when buying one.

Tools for  **Living Well**

WHAT CAN A CANE DO FOR YOU?

If you feel unsteady on your feet and/or have a "bad" leg, a cane can provide you with balance and support. Using a cane while walking can also give you more confidence in your abilities, helping you to enjoy your life and your independence.

CHOOSING A CANE

Canes come in different handles, lengths and colours. A comfortable handle will make the cane more stable in your hand.

Because individual needs vary, you may want to speak to a health care professional about choosing the best cane for you.

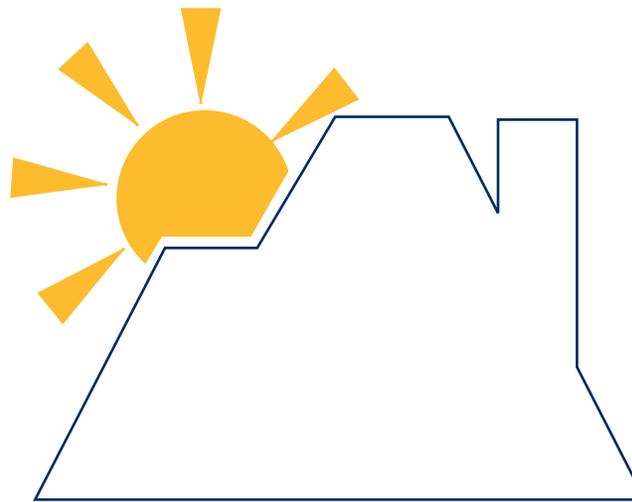
TO ADJUST YOUR CANE

For wooden canes:

1. When your cane is upside down, mark the cane at the level of your wrist (see figure 1).
2. Remove the rubber tip.
3. Cut the cane 1.25 cm (1/2 inch) shorter than where you marked it.
4. Replace the rubber tip.

For aluminum canes:

1. Most canes can be easily adjusted within 2.50 cm (1.0 inch) of the desired height. To correctly adjust the height, follow the instructions on how to measure your cane (see figure 1).



TO MEASURE YOUR CANE

1. Turn the cane upside down and put the handle on the floor.
2. Stand with your arms at your sides.
3. The tip of the cane should be at the level of your wrist.

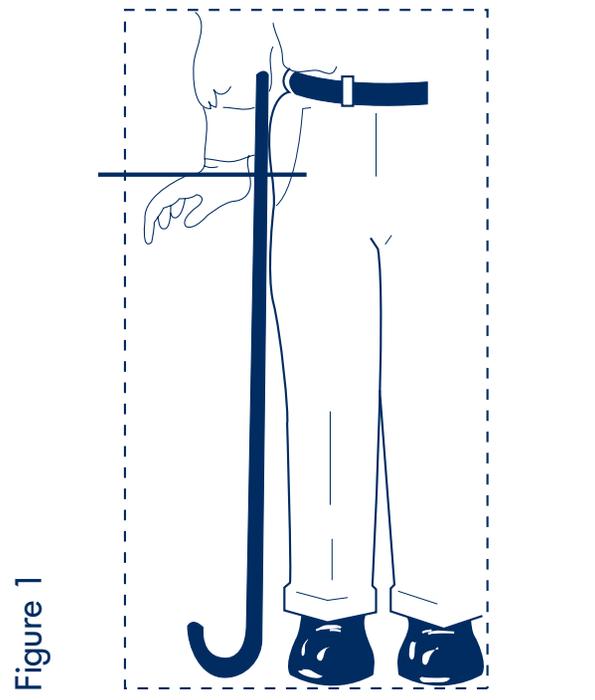


Figure 1

WALKING WITH A CANE

- Always hold the cane on your strongest side. If you have a "bad" leg (weakness or pain) hold the cane in the hand of your "good" leg.
- Always move the cane and the opposite leg together (see figure 2).
- Replace worn rubber tips.
- Attach an ice pick during the winter.

GOING UP THE STAIRS

1. Take the first step up with your strong leg.
2. Then, move the cane and the "bad" leg to that same step.

GOING DOWN THE STAIRS

1. Take the first step down with the cane and the "bad" leg.
2. Then, lower the strong leg to that same step.

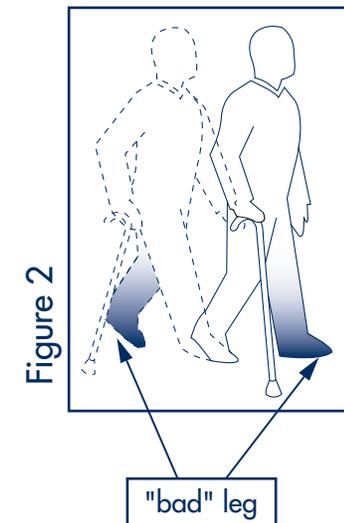


Figure 2

"bad" leg

RECOMMENDED CANE ACCESSORIES

Rubber tip: A rubber tip fits onto the bottom of the cane to help prevent the cane from slipping on wet surfaces.

Rubber tips should be replaced when worn.

Ice pick for canes: An ice pick clamps onto the bottom of the cane to help prevent the cane from slipping on snow-covered, slushy or icy surfaces.

Ice picks should always be used outdoors during the winter season.

OTHER HELPFUL CANE ACCESSORIES

Cane holder: A cane holder clips onto the cane so it can hang from the edge of any table, counter or desk, when not in use.

Cane hand loop: A cane hand loop wraps around the cane and your hand so that the cane will not drop to the ground if your hand lets go.

WHERE CAN I PURCHASE A CANE?

Different styles of canes may be found at:

- your local pharmacy
- your local medical supply store
- select department stores

For your convenience, phone ahead to be certain that the cane you are looking for is available.

1 in 3 seniors fall each year.
It could happen to you or
someone you love.



Assistive Devices to Help Prevent Falls.

A joint venture between the University of Ottawa and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT).

For more information about this project please contact the CAOT at **613-523-2268**
or **www.caot.ca**

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The views expressed herein do not necessarily represent the official policies of Health Canada.

Not medical advice: The information in this pamphlet is intended for educational purposes only. It is not and should not be taken as advice or treatment from a doctor or health care professional. Never disregard professional medical or health care advice or delay in seeking it because of something you have read in this pamphlet.