

If you have ever sprained your ankle, broken a toe, torn a meniscus or cracked a hip you know how important the smooth motion of the hips, knees, ankles and toes are to walking and movement. If your gait is less than smooth, if arthritis, injury or other physical weakness has put a hitch into your giddy up you may wish to seek the counsel of your chiropractor, orthopedist, osteopath, podiatrist or other health care provider. You may also find yourself holding a cane, wondering how to make this stick work for you.

First the cane must be fitted to your height and arm length.

Here are instructions for fitting a cane

- 1) Put on your usual walking shoes and stand naturally upright as possible.
- 2) Let arms fall to the sides naturally with a normal relaxed bend at the elbow.
- 3) Have someone measure the distance from the bottom crease of the wrist to the floor.
- 4) Adjust the length of your cane to the above measured distance.

A cane of the wrong length will put excessive stress on the wrist, elbow and shoulder. Please note that some cane users may have specific conditions that will require them to have a cane at a different height.

Next you have to use the cane correctly. A cane used properly will distribute the weight off the weak or tender joint, provide you with extra balance and allow you to maintain a smooth flowing stride.

Here are instructions for using a cane.

- 1) Hold the properly fitted cane in the hand on the unaffected side. (example: Funky right foot – Cane in left hand)
- 2) Advance the cane simultaneously with the opposite affected limb.
- 3) Lean your weight through the arm holding the cane as needed.
- 4) Always have the unaffected lower limb assume the first full weight bearing step on level ground.
- 5) Practice.

Using the cane on the same side as the affected lower limb will result in more of a hobble and less of a smooth stride.

Walking at a smooth brisk pace is my preferred outdoor exercise. As the days heat up my mornings will begin early to take advantage of the predawn cool. These morning walks wake up my body and charge my metabolism and sooth my mind. Comfortable clothing and good shoes are all the gear I need for my daily jaunt. However when the walk turns into a hike and the trail is rugged, rocky and steeper than I'm accustomed to, I will gladly use a hiking stick with adjustable length, comfortable grip, rubber tip and wrist strap to give me a little extra balance and take the strain off of the knee or hip that will probably be aching towards the end of the hike.

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