

REHAB NEWS



Submitted By: Therapy Department at Healthcare Therapy Services, Inc.

Getting Around Safely Using a Cane or Walker

The use of a cane or walker has become the norm for most seniors today to help prevent falls. Ironically, these tools can be just as dangerous as they are helpful if they are not used properly. The CDC estimates nearly 50,000 seniors end up in the emergency room each year after falling while using a cane or walker.

Health professionals are urging adults who use canes and walkers as walking aids to be properly assessed and fitted by a therapist to avoid fall-related injuries. Physical Therapists are trained professionals that are able to assess your individual needs to ensure that you are using the proper walking aid as well as make sure it is in proper working condition.

Tips for Using Canes & Walkers

1. The walker or cane should be about the **height of your wrists** when your arms are at your sides.
2. In order to be properly supported by a cane, you should be using it on the side of your body **opposite from your injury or weakness**.
3. When using a walker, your **arms should be slightly bent when holding** on, but you shouldn't have to bend forward at the waist to reach it.
4. Periodically **check the rubber tips** at the bottom of the cane or walker. Be sure to replace them if they are uneven or worn.
5. **Wear flat shoes** to provide a good base of support.



Therapy Can Help Reduce Falls & Improve Balance

Maintaining proper balance and sense of body position is critical to preventing falls. A Physical Therapist works with individuals to identify risk factors and designs an individualized program of exercises and activities with an emphasis on strength, flexibility, and proper gait. Occupational Therapists work with you to discuss changes and modifications that can be made around your home to help prevent falls from occurring. If you have concerns about your balance, ask your doctor if you could benefit from therapy.

References: APTA.org



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