

Cane & Walker Fit Guide

Choosing and using your assistive device safely

ASSISTIVE DEVICE SAFETY

A cane or walker only reduces fall risk when it is the right height, the right type, and used the right way. This guide walks through fitting your device and using it safely at home and in the community.

Is Your Cane the Right Height?

- Stand up straight in your regular walking shoes, arms relaxed at your sides.
- The top of the cane should line up with the crease on the inside of your wrist.
- When holding the cane, your elbow should bend to about 15–20 degrees — not straight, not sharply bent.
- Most adjustable canes have a push-button collar; recheck the fit any time footwear changes (e.g., switching from sneakers to slippers).

Is Your Walker the Right Height?

- With arms relaxed at your sides, the top of the walker's handgrips should meet the crease of your wrist.
- When gripping the handles, elbows should bend slightly (about 15–30 degrees).
- Standing too tall or hunching to reach the handles are both signs the height needs adjusting.

Which Side Does the Cane Go On?

- A cane is generally held in the hand **opposite** the weaker or more painful leg.
- Move the cane forward at the same time as the weaker leg, then step through with the stronger leg.
- On stairs: going up, lead with the stronger leg; going down, lead with the cane and the weaker leg.

Quick check: If you lean noticeably to one side while walking with your device, the height or fit likely needs adjustment — ask your physical therapist to reassess it.

Everyday Safety Habits

- Check rubber tips regularly — replace them when the tread is smooth or worn on one side.
- Keep the device within arm's reach at all times, including next to the bed and in the bathroom.
- Avoid using a cane or walker on wet, icy, or uneven surfaces without extra caution and support.
- Never use a walker to pull yourself up from a seated position — walkers can tip. Push up from the arms of a stable chair first.
- If a wheeled walker has a seat and brakes, always engage the brakes before sitting down.

Talk to your PT if: the device feels unstable, your grip aches after short walks, you're leaning to one side, or you've had a near-fall while using it. A brief refitting or technique check can make a meaningful difference.