

# STRAIGHT CANE

## **Purpose**

Canes are designed to give the user additional stability when used properly. When properly used, a cane can provide added stability and assistance to an individual while walking. Canes are not designed to support the full weight of the user. Your physician or therapist has ordered your cane for a specific reason. If your physician or therapist has given you specific instructions, follow them. If you have not seen a therapist or physician, we recommend that you do so.

## **Types**

Canes come in many different styles, such as folding, adjustable, and rigid, and can be manufactured out of many different materials such as wood, aluminum, and plastic. Make sure you read and understand all manufacturers' operating instructions. Folding canes are just as strong as non-folding canes and have the added convenience of compact storage.

Canes can also come with many different handle or grip types. The choice of handle type can be made based on comfort and the size of the user's hand. Curved or offset handles have the added benefit of displacing the user's weight directly over the cane tip; this may eliminate discomfort and fatigue and improve stability.

All canes have a maximum weight limit that they can support. It is important to understand the limits and capacities of your cane:

Weight of user (stated by user) is \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.  
Maximum weight capacity of cane is \_\_\_\_\_ pounds.

## **Use**

A properly fitted cane is adjusted for height when wearing the shoes you will be wearing while using the cane. The handgrip should be approximately at the hip joint and the elbows will be slightly bent (20 - 30 degree angle). Make sure all adjustable-height canes have tight connections and/or fully engaged spring buttons. Your physician or therapist may determine different cane adjustments and uses from those described in this educational sheet.

The cane is held in the non-affected or good hand. Stand with your legs slightly apart and the non-affected leg slightly behind the affected leg. The cane should be placed approximately 12 inches in front and on the side of the non-affected leg. Your first step is with the non-affected leg. Then the weak or affected leg moves forward while the cane is firmly held to the floor. Your physician or therapist may specify changes to this basic technique. Never negotiate stairs without consulting your physician or therapist.

When utilizing your cane for assistance in standing from a seated position, both feet should be firmly planted on the floor. The cane must be in your proper hand. Push up on the armrest to a standing position.

## **Safety**

The safe use of a cane requires it to be used as instructed, which includes the following safety precautions:

- Check the security of the handgrip.
- Ensure that all snap buttons protrude through the adjusting holes.
- Ensure that locking collars are tight.
- If using a wood cane, only allow qualified dealers to cut cane length.
- Do not go up or down steps without approval from your physician or therapist.

If the cane is to be used in environments that are above 100° F (32° C) or have high humidity or conditions that will cause the cane to get wet, the operator must ensure that the handgrip is secure; these types of environments may cause handgrips to twist. Always use caution when using a cane on any wet or icy surface.

In order to ensure care and provide operator safety, make sure you follow these safety guidelines:

- Use nightlights to increase vision around areas of use.
- Wipe up any water or slippery floor spills.
- Remove tripping hazards (loose floorboards, uneven floors, throw rugs, extension cords, clutter, etc.)
- Install grab bars, use bath mats with suction cups, and use elevated toilet seats to prevent falls.
- Do not use a cane when taking any medications that may cause dizziness, drowsiness, and/or unsteadiness.

## **Maintenance**

The handgrip is very important and you should inspect it regularly. Worn or damaged handgrips or cane tips must be replaced immediately. The handgrip should also be checked for movement or slippage on a regular basis and replaced if damaged. Ensure that the snap button releases and engages properly, and ensure that any locking collars fully lock the cane from moving.