

Day 9: Mobility & Assistive Devices

- If we have difficulties walking on our own or maintaining our balance, then we can use an assistive device, such as a walker or a cane.

However, these assistive aids only work well when they are used properly

- When an assistive aid is used incorrectly, we run the risk of having a fall or becoming injured.
- The good news is that if we change the way that we use our assistive devices, we can improve our walking and our balance and reduce the risk of a fall!

To use a walker properly:

- First, set up your walker according to your own height.
- The top of your walker should match the crease in your wrist when you stand up straight.
- When walking with a walker, ensure that you're standing up tall.
- Avoid putting all of your weight on the walker. It should be used as a guide.
 - If your arms are doing all of the work, then your legs aren't working as hard and as a result, you may lose some strength and functioning in your legs.
- Try to walk with your feet between the wheels. Avoid having your walker very far out in front of you (as if you are reaching for it, or trying to catch up to it).
- Never try to climb stairs or use an escalator with your walker.
- Do not forget your walker! If you need it, then ensure that it is always with you.
- If you find yourself forgetting your walker you may benefit from a cord that connects your wrist and your walker.
- If you are walking around with your walker and you do not seem to need it, then maybe you do not need it.
- Be sure to evaluate your need, or have some one else assess it for you.



CANADA

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To use a cane properly:

- Set up your cane according to your own height
- The top of your cane should reach to the crease in your wrist when you stand up straight. Your elbow should bend a bit when you hold your cane
- When walking with a cane, ensure that you hold the cane in the arm opposite to your weak leg or opposite to the side that needs support
- When you walk, the cane and your injured leg should strike the ground at the same time. To start, position your cane about one small stride ahead and step off on your injured leg. Finish the step with your uninjured leg
- To *climb stairs*: grasp the handrail (if possible) and step up on your good leg first, with your cane in the hand opposite the injured leg. Then step up on the injured leg
- To *come down stairs*: put your cane on the step first, then your injured leg, and finally the good leg, which carries your body weight
- If you are carrying your cane and not using it, then perhaps you don't need it. It would be better to discard the cane, since it is just taking up a free hand
- If you are not using your cane but you are holding onto it, and you happen to stumble, a cane will not be able to catch your fall, and it will limit your ability to catch yourself on something else
- You can also switch to using a walker if you find yourself carrying your cane but still feel unsteady

What can we do about our assistive aids?

- See your doctor or an occupational therapist about how to use your device properly
- See a nurse to ensure that your device is properly set up for your own body. If the height is too high or too low, you could become injured
- Use your devices properly! If you do not, it could lead to a fall
- If you do use the devices properly, it can promote improved walking ability, improved posture and improved functioning

