

Lakeview Community Wellness Center Orthopaedic Connection

How to Choose and Use a Cane

By Thomas J. Haverbush, M.D.
Orthopaedic Surgeon

Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

In any discussion of knee arthritis a cane is an effective method of reducing medial knee loading. Studies show that if load is decreased on the inner or medial aspect of the knee, there is a decrease of the arthritis pain.

Alas, the plain old humble cane gets little attention in this high tech world of cutting edge medicine. I am capable of performing total knee replacement and teaching you about the wonders of LCS total knee replacements. But, it is also my job to help you understand one of the most basic means of managing knee arthritis – the cane.

How does a cane help?

Using a cane in the opposite hand can result in significant reduced pressure on the arthritic knee. With each step the support of a cane can decrease by a third or even as much as half, the amount of pressure on your knee and hip joint.

Also those who feel unsteady often find a cane helps them feel more secure.

Patients, after surgery or injury benefit from a cane too.

The Right Cane

No matter why you need one the rules are the same. It has to be the right fit for you.

- Height. This is the most important. Stand up straight, arm at side, elbow straight. Bend your wrist up and down. Where the wrist is bending is how tall your cane should be.
- Elbow should bend 30 degrees while using the cane.
- Place cane six inches out to side of your foot so you don't trip on it.

Aluminum is Best

They are somewhat more expensive but have two advantages. They are adjustable and weigh less.

Grip

Many types, but a contoured anatomical grip will be most comfortable.

Prongs on the tip (slip resistant rubber)

One, three, or four prongs. It's a personal preference. You have to try it out to see what you like.

Walking properly

A cane goes in the hand opposite to the painful side. Lean slightly to the cane side and away from pain. Put cane forward at same time as the painful leg.

Oh yes, don't borrow someone else's cane unless they are exactly your same height and size! Would you wear someone else's shoes? See what I mean.

Please remember that anyone can make an appointment to see Dr. Haverbush at his office in Alma, at 315 Warwick Dr., across from Gratiot Medical Center. Call 989-463-6092 to make an appointment.

And don't forget every article I have written for Lakeview Area News is on my Website, www.orthopodsurgeon.com. Check it out. I specialize in you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush