

Walking Aids

Using a Cane

A cane helps to:

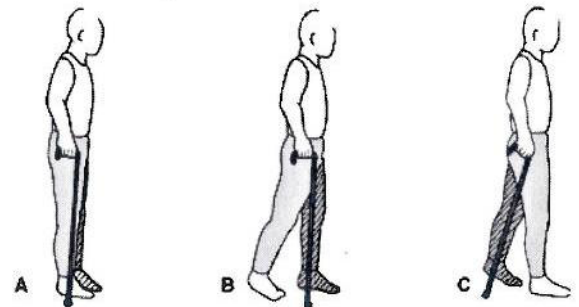
- Take weight off the joints in your legs and feet (up to 40%). This can improve your pain and help you to walk faster and for longer periods of time.
- Improve your balance.

How tall should my cane be?

Stand up and let your arms hang by your side. The top of the cane should reach your wrist.

How do I use my cane?

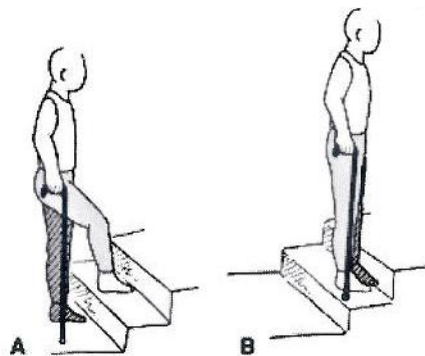
Hold your cane on the **opposite** side of the **sore** leg (A). When walking, move the cane forward and plant it with your sore leg. For example, your right hand and left leg move together (B). Keep the cane moving with your sore leg while you walk (C).



Walking with a Cane

How do I use my cane on stairs and curbs?

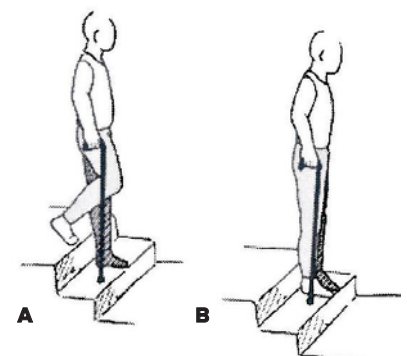
Face the curb or stairs. Go one step at a time. Hold on to a railing if possible.



Going Upstairs

When going up: Step up with your **strong** leg (A). Follow with your sore leg and cane (B).

When going down: Step down with your **sore** leg and cane (A). Follow with your strong leg (B).



Going Downstairs

What kind of cane should I buy?

Choose a sturdy cane with a comfortable handle. It should have a rubber tip that will not slip.

When should I use a cane?

It depends. Some people need a cane whenever they are on their feet. Other people will only use a cane on long walks or when they are on rough ground. Talk to your health care provider about what is right for you.

For more information, please visit www.vch.ca/oasis

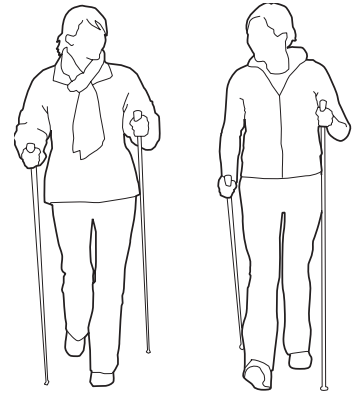
Walking Poles

Walking poles help to:

- **Reduce the load on your leg and feet joints** by around 30%. This may make it easier for you to be active with painful joints and improve your walking pattern
- **Burn more calories** while walking (up to 40%)
- Improve **posture and balance**
- **Engage more muscles** (core and upper limb) while walking

How do I make sure my poles are the correct height?

1. Stand up straight and Bend your elbows so that they are at 90 degrees, or an “L” shape.
2. Adjust your poles so that you are holding the handles of the poles while your elbows stay in this “L” position.



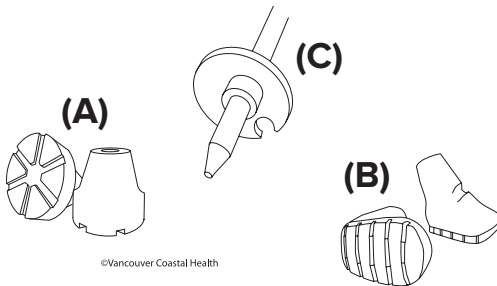
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How do I walk with poles?

When we walk naturally, our arms swing forward with the opposite leg. We use the same pattern when walking with poles:

- Move your right pole forward with your left leg and your left pole forward with your right leg.
- Aim to plant each pole in line with the opposite foot. This is what helps to unload the joints.
- Move your whole arm forward to plant the pole on the ground.
- Learning to walk with poles naturally can take practice! If you lose co-ordination, just stop and start again. Using poles works more muscles than regular walking, so begin by walking only 1/3 of your usual distance.

What kind of tip should I have on my poles?



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- A. The bell-shaped rubber tip (like the end of the cane) is good for balance and for taking extra weight.
- B. The boot-shaped rubber tip is good for moving more quickly as the angle of the tip helps to “push” you forward. This tip can also be more comfortable to use for those with hand, shoulder or neck pain.
- C. The metal tip found under the rubber tip is good for gripping natural trails and for use on slippery surfaces, e.g. icy sidewalks.

Which handles are best?

Wider handles with a ledge on the outside make it easier to grip and put weight through your poles, particularly if you have hand pain or trouble gripping. Be cautious when using a strap to put weight through the poles, as this could contribute to thumb or hand injury in the event of a slip or trip while holding your poles.

Where can I buy walking poles?

- Health/Medical Equipment or Sporting Goods stores
- Urban Poling urbanpoling.com 1-877-499-7999 - Activator Walking Poles
- For more information visit www.vch.ca/oasis

For more copies, go online at vch.eduhealth.ca or email phem@vch.ca and quote Catalogue No. **FA.256.W35**
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Making better
decisions together
with patients
and families