Mobility Aids for Osteoarthritis Patients

by PATRICIA BRATIANU

How Mobility Aids Can Help

Your joints hurt. They are prone to injury. Your range of motion is impaired. It's hard to do the things that used to be so simple you didn't give them any thought.

If you have osteoarthritis, these are thoughts and feelings that plague you on a daily basis. Fortunately, there are steps you can take to enhance your comfort and keep you safe – and one of those steps is investing in a mobility aid.

Canes

Canes come in several styles and are usually made of wood or metal. Quad canes have four points at the bottom while tripod canes and have three, and usually have a jointed bottom.

Be sure that bottom of your cane is in good shape and not slippery. A simple cane can be helpful when rising from a chair, or if you need just a little physical and moral support for walking. They can be useful in other ways, too – many people use the curved ends of their canes to reach for objects.

Canes are relatively inexpensive and take up little room. Be careful that you place your cane in a location where you will not trip over it.

Quad and tripod canes offer more stability than standard canes, and generally speaking are a better choice for most people.

Walkers

There are three main kinds of walkers. "Regular" walkers are the least expensive. They have four tips and are made of aluminum. Rolling walkers have wheels on the two of the legs. Some rolling walkers have brakes, while others do not. You can also get walkers that have seats. They are more expensive, but afford you with a place to sit if you become fatigued while walking.

Walkers provide you with much more stability than canes do. Many people decorate their walkers or attach baskets and other devices to carry objects in. Walkers can be very useful pieces of equipment to keep you safe and independent.

The biggest obstacles for users of walkers are devices that are not the right height, and improper use of the equipment. Having a health care provider size your walker and evaluate your method of using it is critical.

Wheelchairs and Scooters

Wheelchairs come in a wide array of sizes and types. Lightweight walkers are usually the least expensive and most versatile. However, if you will be sitting in your walker for most of the day you need a sturdier wheelchair, possible fitted with a special cushion. Power wheelchairs are expensive, but can increase your mobility, greatly.

Power scooters afford you with the opportunity to go to most places, but they are heavy and expensive. Like other assistive devices, you should receive instruction about using and maintaining a scooter.

Using Mobility Aids

Avoid using someone else's equipment when possible. You need to have equipment that is the right size for you and meets your specific needs.

Ask your health care provider how to use your device correctly. An incorrectly sized or used device can impair your mobility and increase your risk of falling. Be sure to examine your equipment regularly to ensure that it remains in good repair, and keep your equipment within reach.

Keeping Mobile with Osteoarthritis

Mobility is not just about getting from place to place. It involves keeping your joints mobile, staying safe, and maintaining a high quality of life. By combining exercise, rest, safety strategies, and the use of adaptive equipment you can be mobile despite having osteoarthritis.