

Canes and Crutches

DME.WC.108.A

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Introduction

Canes and crutches are addressed by this guideline.

Health Equity Consideration

Health equity is the highest level of health for all individuals; health inequity is the avoidable difference in health status or distribution of health resources due to the social conditions in which individuals are born, grow, live, work, and age. Social determinants of health are the conditions in the environment that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality of life outcomes and risks. Examples include the following: safe housing, transportation, and neighborhoods; racism, discrimination, and violence; education, job opportunities, and income; access to nutritious foods and physical activity opportunities; access to clean air and water; and language and literacy skills.

Criteria

A cane or crutch is considered medically necessary when **both** of the following criteria are met:

- The individual needs to use a cane or crutch in the home to take care of their daily needs.
- The individual can manage the cane or crutch effectively.

Not Covered

There is insufficient evidence to demonstrate that an underarm, articulating, spring-assisted crutch (HCPCS E0117) provides superior benefit to a standard crutch and therefore is considered not medically necessary.

Evidence Discussion

A 2019 study by Demir and Yildirim assessed gait and pelvic kinematics in 18 adults with neuromuscular disease who walked with and without a single-point cane, bilateral forearm crutches, and a walker. The study found that all walking aids significantly reduced walking speed, distance covered, and cadence compared with unaided walking. Kinematic analysis revealed a statistically significant difference only in pelvic extension

between the walking-aid conditions ($p < 0.05$). Among the devices, participants rated the single-point cane as the most useful (61%), most comfortable (44.4%), and most preferred (61%).¹

A 2021 randomized controlled trial by Kang et al. investigated the impact of weight support feedback cane (WSFC) training versus conventional cane (CC) training on lower limb muscle activity and gait ability in 30 individuals with chronic stroke over four weeks. Both groups demonstrated significant improvements in muscle activation and gait parameters ($p < 0.05$), but the WSFC group achieved greater gains. Gait improvements were also superior in the WSFC group, with greater enhancement in single-limb support phase (6.4% vs. 1.6%; $p = 0.047$) and symmetry index (9.5 vs. 5.0; $P = 0.008$). These findings indicated that real-time feedback during cane-assisted gait training provided additional benefits in promoting weight transfer to the affected limb, improving muscle activation, and enhancing gait symmetry beyond conventional verbal instruction.²

A 2025 systematic review by de Paula Magalhães et al. evaluated the evidence-based effectiveness of canes and crutches for individuals with neurological impairments affecting lower-limb function. Results showed that both devices significantly improved weight redistribution and reduced joint loading compared with unaided ambulation, leading to decreased pain and enhanced stability. Canes were most beneficial for individuals with mild deficits, improving gait symmetry and energy efficiency, while crutches provided greater unloading of the affected limb, making them suitable for non-weight-bearing or partial weight-bearing conditions. The findings emphasized that proper device selection and training were essential to optimize functional outcomes and minimize fall risk, supporting individualized prescription based on neurological assessment.³

Codes addressed in this guideline

HCPCS code descriptions

HCPCS Code	Description
A4635	Underarm pad, crutch, replacement, each

¹ Demir YP, Yildirim SA. Different walk aids on gait parameters and kinematic analysis of the pelvis in patients with Adult Neuromuscular Disease. *Neurosciences (Riyadh)*. 2019;24(1):36-44. doi:10.17712/nsj.2019.1.20180316

² Kang YS, Oh GB, Cho KH. Walking Training with a Weight Support Feedback Cane Improves Lower Limb Muscle Activity and Gait Ability in Patients with Chronic Stroke: A Randomized Controlled Trial. *Med Sci Monit*. 2021;27:e931565.

³ de Paula Magalhães J, Ferreira de Brito SA, Landers M, et al. Effects of using conventional assistive devices on spatiotemporal gait parameters of adults with neurological disorders: A systematic review protocol. *PLoS One*. 2025;20(4):e0321019. Published 2025 Apr 11. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0321019

HCPSC Code	Description
E0100	Cane, includes canes of all materials, adjustable or fixed, with tip
E0105	Cane, quad or three prong, includes canes of all materials, adjustable or fixed, with tips
E0110	Crutches, forearm, includes crutches of various materials, adjustable or fixed, pair, complete with tips and handgrips
E0111	Crutch forearm, includes crutches of various materials, adjustable or fixed, each, with tip and handgrips
E0112	Crutches underarm, wood, adjustable or fixed, pair, with pads, tips and hand grips
E0113	Crutch underarm, wood, adjustable or fixed, each, with pad, tip and handgrip
E0114	Crutches underarm, other than wood, adjustable or fixed, pair, with pads, tips and handgrips
E0116	Crutch, underarm, other than wood, adjustable or fixed, with pad, tip, handgrip, with or without shock absorber, each
E0117	Crutch, underarm, articulating, spring assisted, each
E0118	Crutch substitute, lower leg platform, with or without wheels, each
E0153	Platform attachment, forearm crutch, each
L0978	Axillary crutch extension

References

1. LCD - Canes and Crutches (L33733). Cms.gov. Published 2020. Accessed December 31, 2025. <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/lcd.aspx?lcdid=33733&ver=19&keywordtype=starts&keyword=canes&bc=0>
2. Canes and Crutches - Policy Article (A52459). Cms.gov. Published 2022. Accessed December 31, 2025. <https://www.cms.gov/medicare-coverage-database/view/article.aspx?articleid=52459&ver=23&keywordtype=starts&keyword=canes&bc=0>
3. de Paula Magalhães J, Ferreira de Brito SA, Landers M, et al. Effects of using conventional assistive devices on spatiotemporal gait parameters of adults with neurological disorders: A systematic review protocol. PLoS One. 2025;20(4):e0321019. Published 2025 Apr 11. doi:10.1371/journal.pone.0321019