

GUIDANCE ON USER WEIGHT LIMITS FOR WALKING STICKS

A frequently asked question is, “What is the maximum user weight this walking stick will safely tolerate?” However, it is not always possible, or wise, to guarantee that a particular walking stick will be suitable for people of a given weight for the following reasons:

1. People use walking sticks in different ways. Few people lean down on them directly from above; instead they lean on them at a variety of angles depending on their disability if they have one, general state of health, how good their sense of balance is and many other factors. Therefore, although it is possible to test a stick’s strength by applying pressure from above and seeing at what point it buckles or breaks, this in no way reflects the reality of how people use walking sticks.

NB: This does not apply to seat sticks, where weight tests are relevant as they are sat on from above. See our price list for weight limit guidance on individual seat sticks.

2. The amount of force a person exerts on a walking stick is linked to their physical condition, not their overall weight. A 16 stone (circa. 225lb / 100kg) person using a stick for light balance and support will exert far less force on it than an 8 stone (c. 112lb / 50kg) person who needs to place a great deal of weight on their stick. Even if a walking stick were ‘guaranteed’ for 12 stone, you can see how it could be unsafe to sell it to the 8 stone person, and yet be perfectly appropriate for the 16 stone person.

In most instances, retailers can use their good judgement as to whether a stick is appropriate to the customer. For example, it would not be sensible to sell a fine, silver collectors’ cane to a person who needs a stick for everyday, heavy orthopaedic support, however much they admire it. Instead, consult the ‘Orthopaedic Canes’ section of our range to see attractive sticks that are also designed to provide robust support. We stock a small range of heavy duty canes that are guaranteed by the manufacturer to carry particular weights, as long as they are not subjected to abnormal use. We also stock a ‘Help Me Up’ quad cane with handles at two levels, to assist people when rising from a bed or chair; an occasion when walking sticks can be subjected to excess force.

If you or your employees are in any doubt, you could suggest your customer consults their doctor or physiotherapist for qualified medical advice on what kind of stick would be appropriate to their needs. Alternatively, please call the Classic Canes sales department on tel. +44 (0)1460 75686 for general guidance.

Finally, it is important to remember that a walking stick is an aid to balance and mobility. It cannot be expected to take a person’s whole weight: this is the job of a crutch or a walking frame. There may be occasions when this has to be tactfully discussed with your customer.

We strongly recommend that you discuss these points with your employees. It is important that they are properly informed if they are to sell walking sticks responsibly.

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