

Crutches

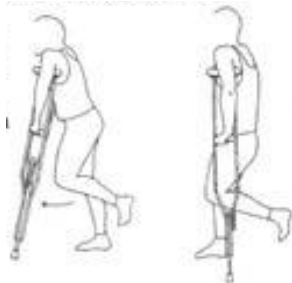
Brown Health Services Patient Education Series

What are crutches?

Crutches are supports that help you walk when you have an injury below your hip that makes it difficult to walk.

How do I use crutches?

Walking: With the injured side off the ground, lean forward slightly and bring the crutches forward evenly (~1 foot in front of you). Putting your weight on your hands against the grips of the crutches, swing your uninjured leg forward and land with your foot just in front of the crutches. Don't rest your armpits on the crutches because the pressure can cause damage to a nerve that passes through the armpit. Repeat. (Note: In some cases your health care provider may allow you to put some weight on your injured leg while you are using crutches.)



Getting up from a chair or bed: Inch yourself to the front of the chair. Hold both crutches together in the hand of the injured side. Push yourself up with the other hand while you push up on the crutches and stand on your good leg. Get your balance and bring your crutches into position on either side of you before you start to walk.



Sitting down: Hold your crutches together by the grips in the hand on the injured side. Hold onto the chair or bed with your other hand and lower yourself slowly. Unless you are allowed to put some weight on your injured leg, keep your injured leg off the ground and keep your weight on the uninjured leg. Be sure to lean your crutches upside down- crutches leaned on their tips tend to fall over.

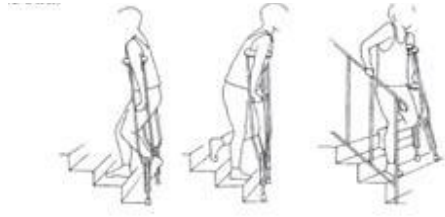


Going through doorways: Be sure to give yourself enough room to allow your feet and crutches to clear the door. After opening the door, block it from swinging closed with a crutch tip. Walk through the doorway.



Stairs: Going up, get close to the stairs. Step up with the uninjured leg, then bring the crutches

and the injured leg up to the step. Repeat. Going down, first bring the crutches and the injured leg down to the lower step. Then step down with the uninjured leg. Repeat. If there is a handrail, put both crutches under the arm of the injured side and use the rail for support.



How can I take care of myself while I'm using crutches?

- Be careful not to slip on water or ice.
- Sometimes crutches rub against the skin between your arm and chest. You may want to use body lotion or talcum powder to prevent skin chafing.
- If your hands get sore or tired, you may want to put extra padding on the crutch grips.
- Be sure not to lean on the crutches and put pressure on your armpits. If there is pressure on your armpits even when you use the crutches correctly, the crutches are too long and need to be shortened.

Adapted from "The Sports Medicine Patient Advisor" 2004. Permission to copy for patient education and from the American Academy of Orthopaedic Surgeons.