

Crutches

How to use them easily and safely



Fitting your crutches

Crutches are sold by the height of the person. Crutches are properly fitted to you when there is space between the top of the crutch and your armpit.

To fit the crutches properly follow these steps:

1. Wearing your normal shoes, stand up straight.
2. Place the crutches under your arms, keeping your shoulders relaxed.
3. Place the crutch tips about 5 to 8 inches (12 to 20 cm) to the side of your feet.
4. With your arms hanging at your sides, there should be space enough for 2 to 3 fingers between your armpit and the top of the crutch pad.
5. The handgrip should be at the level of your wrist when your arm is hanging down by your side.

Space for 2 to 3 fingers between the armpit and top of the crutch

Hand grip at the level of the wrist



If your crutches are too tall or if you lean on the crutch pad often, you can damage your nerves and blood vessels under your armpits.

Weight Bearing

There are four ways of using your crutches depending on how much weight you are allowed to put on your sore leg. This is called 'weight bearing'.

Your doctor, physiotherapist, or nurse will check off (☑) which way you are to use your crutches:

☐ **Non-Weight Bearing**

Do not put any weight on your sore leg. Your leg must **stay off** the ground.

☐ **Feather Weight Bearing**

You are only allowed to lightly touch your toe to the floor for balance. The amount of weight is no more than if you stepped on an egg but not hard enough to crack the shell.

☐ **Partial Weight Bearing**

You can put a part of your weight on your sore leg. This might be from a light weight to almost your full weight. Your doctor, physiotherapist, or nurse tells you how much weight you can put on your sore leg.

☐ **Full Weight Bearing**

You can put as much weight on your sore leg as you feel comfortable with.

Crutch Safety

- Always support your weight with the handgrips. Do not lean on the crutch pads under your armpits. You are probably not using your crutches correctly if you feel tingling or numbness into your arms.
- Make sure to check the rubber tips of the crutches for wear and replace them when they are worn.

- There should be padding on the hand grips and on the top part of the crutch that goes under your armpit.
- Make sure all of the wing nuts are tight. Check them often as they get loose.
- Always wear good, supportive shoes. Wearing socks or slippers could result in a fall.

Getting started

Standing Balance

1. Support your weight through your hands on the hand grips.
2. Squeeze the top part of the crutch firmly onto your side.
3. Place the rubber tip of the crutches slightly ahead and slightly wider than your hips.

To sit down

1. When you get close to the chair, turn and back up until the back of your legs touch the seat.
2. Remove the crutches from under your arms.
3. Use the hand on your sore side to hold both crutches by the handgrip.
4. Keep your sore leg forward (see picture next page).
5. Place the other hand on the arm of the chair and slowly lower yourself down to sitting.



To stand up

1. Use the hand on your sore side to hold both crutches by the handgrip.
2. Slide forward to the edge of the chair.
3. Keep your sore leg forward.
4. Lean forward and push up from the chair using your arms and good leg.
5. Once you have your balance, place one crutch under each arm.



Keep your sore leg forward

Walking With Crutches

Non-Weight Bearing

1. Hold your sore leg off the ground.
2. Move both crutches forward one step length. Make sure the crutches are wide enough apart for your hips to pass through.
3. Move the sore leg forward between the crutches, keeping it off the ground.
4. Push down on the handgrips as you step your good leg forward past the crutches.



Crutches → Sore leg → Good leg

Partial or Full Weight Bearing

1. Move both crutches forward one step length with the crutches wide enough apart for your hips to pass through.
2. Move the sore leg forward between the crutches and place your foot on the ground. Put the amount of weight on your sore leg you have been told to use. As you get more comfortable using the crutches, you will be able to move the crutches and sore leg forward at the same time.
3. Put your weight on your hands and step forward with your good leg.

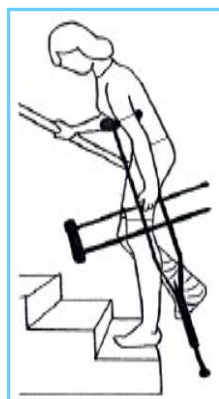
Stairs with Crutches

‘Good leg goes up, sore leg goes down’

Always go up stairs with the good leg first and go down with the crutches and the sore leg first. If there is a railing, use it. If there is no railing, follow these instructions and keep a crutch under each arm.

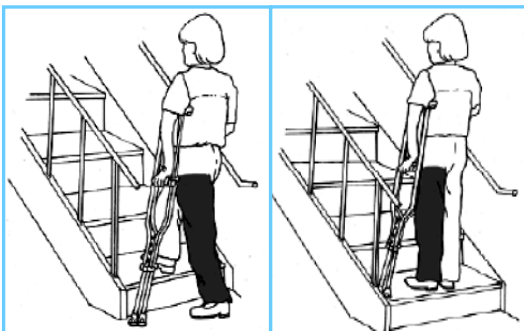
Going Up

1. Take the crutch from the arm near the handrail and carry it sideways, or put both under one arm, or have someone take it up the stairs for you.
2. Use the handrail on one side and a crutch on the other side.
3. Start close to the bottom of the first step.
4. Support yourself with the crutch and the hand rail. Lean forward. Carefully raise your good leg up onto the step.



Non-weight bearing
(Carrying one crutch sideways)

5. Bring the crutch and sore leg up onto the same step as the good leg.
6. Climb one step at a time. Always get your balance before going to the next step.

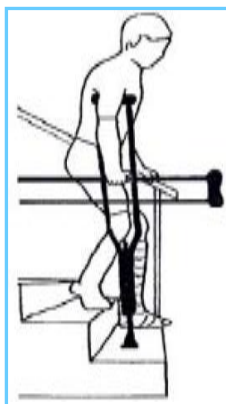


When partial or full weight bearing
(Both crutches under one arm)

Stairs with Crutches

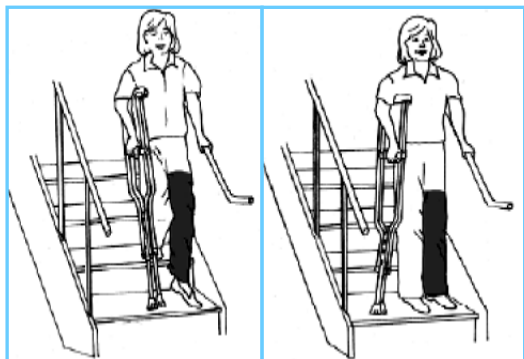
Going Down

1. Stand close to the edge of the top step.
2. Place the crutches as you did going up the stairs.
3. Move your hand down the railing a little below you at the next step down.
4. Lower the crutch and the sore leg down to the next step.
5. Put your weight on the crutch and the handrail.



Non-weight bearing
(Carrying one crutch sideways)

- Slowly, and with control, lower your good leg down to the same step.
6. Take one step at a time. Make sure you have your balance before going to the next step.



When partial or full weight bearing
(Both crutches under one arm)

Getting into your car

Use these steps if your hip or knee does not bend easily.

1. Open the door.
2. Make sure the seat is fully back.
3. Turn around and back up to the edge of the seat.
4. Sit down.
5. Use your good leg and arms to push yourself back into the seat until you are back far enough so that your sore leg can move into the car easily.

To learn more, it's good to ask:

- Your family doctor
- Your physiotherapist
- Fraser Health Virtual Care
1-800-314-0999 or live chat online at
fraserhealth.ca/virtualcare
10:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m., daily
- HealthLinkBC - call 8-1-1 (7-1-1 for deaf and hard of hearing) or go online at HealthLinkBC.ca

Line drawing graphics copyright of Hamilton Health Sciences, Hamilton, Ontario and used with permission.

www.fraserhealth.ca

This information does not replace the advice given to you by your healthcare provider.

Catalogue #262745 (October 2012)

To order: patienteduc@fraserhealth.ca