

# How To Use Crutches

## Crutch Height

Proper crutch height is very important for safe walking. Stand and place the crutch tips 6 inches forward and 6 inches to the outside of your feet. You should be able to fit at least 2 finger-widths between the top of the crutch and your armpit.

Hold on to the handgrips. Slightly bend your elbows.

- **Adjust the crutch height by:**
  - pushing in the button and moving the crutch leg until it catches in the proper hole

or

  - removing the nuts and bolts, moving the crutch leg to the proper height and replacing the nuts and bolts.
- **Set the handgrips by:**
  - pulling out the buttons on either side of the crutch, moving the handgrip to the proper hole and pushing the buttons back in

or

  - removing the nut and bolt, moving the handgrip to the proper height and replacing the nut and bolt.

## Weight Bearing Status

Weight-bearing status is the amount of weight you are allowed to put down on your injured leg. Your weight bearing status will be one of the following.

- **Non weight bearing (NWB):**  
No weight is allowed on your injured foot. Your foot must be off the floor entirely.
- **Touch weight bearing (TTWB or TDWB):**  
Rest the foot of your injured leg on the floor for balance only.
- **Partial weight bearing (PWB):**  
Some weight, as directed by your health care provider, may be put on your injured leg.
- **Full weight bearing (FWB) or weight bearing as tolerated (WBAT):** Full weight may be put on your injured leg up to your pain tolerance.

## Getting Up From a Chair or Bed

- Scoot to the edge of the chair or bed.
- If you cannot put your full weight on the injured foot, stretch it out in front of you.
- If your left foot or leg is injured, use your left hand to hold both crutches by the handgrips. If your right foot or leg is injured, use your right hand to hold both crutches by the handgrips.
- Using your good side, push up with your arm on the seat of the chair, the armrest or the mattress.

*(over)*

- Stand up and check your balance.
- Place the crutches under your arms and press them close to your body.

## Sitting Down on a Chair or Bed

- Back up to the chair or bed until you can feel it against the back of your legs.
- If you can't put all of your weight on the injured foot, stretch it out in front of you.
- If your left foot or leg is injured, use your left hand to hold both crutches by the handgrips and reach back for the chair or bed with your right hand.

If your right foot or leg is injured, use your right hand to hold both crutches by the handgrips and reach back for the chair or bed with your left hand.

- Lower yourself slowly, bending at the hips.

## Walking With Crutches

- Place the crutches under your arms and press them close to your body.
- **Always bear weight through your arms — never on your armpits.**

## Walking Pattern

- **Three-point gait:** Bring the crutches forward first. If you are allowed to put some weight on the injured leg, place that foot between the crutches, then step through with the non-injured leg.

If you cannot bear weight on the injured leg, then hold it up and simply lift your weight with your arms and “swing” through the crutches, placing your noninjured foot slightly ahead of the crutches.

Always use a three-point (tripod) stance before you bring the crutches forward again.

- **Two- or four-point gait:** Move your right crutch forward, then your left foot, your left crutch and right foot. When you are used to this, you will move the opposite leg and crutch at the same time.

## Walking Up Stairs

- Start with your feet close to the base of the first step.
- Step up with the non-injured leg first, then the injured leg and the crutches.
- Check your balance before going to the next step.

## Walking Down Stairs

- Stand at the edge of the first step.
- Bend at the hips and knees and move the crutches and injured leg down to the next step.
- Follow with the non-injured leg.
- Check your balance before going to the next step.

## Helpful Hints

- Take small steps while walking on wet surfaces or ice to keep you from slipping or falling.
- If another person is with you, they should always stand in front of you when going down steps and behind you when going up steps.
- Remove throw rugs to keep you from tripping.
- When stopping to rest, never “hang” on the crutches by your armpits.