



Using Crutches

Patient Education Series

Exercises to make walking easier

Thigh muscles

- ◆ While still in bed, tighten your knee muscles until the front of your knee “wrinkles.”
- ◆ Repeat this exercise 10 times and do it several times a day. Continue after you’ve started using crutches.

Shoulder, arm and wrist muscles

- ◆ While sitting in bed, place an equal number of books on each side of your lap.
- ◆ Place your hands on the books and push down to straighten your elbows and lift your body from the bed.
- ◆ When you can sit in a chair, push down on the arms of chair to lift your body from the seat.
- ◆ Repeat this exercise 10 times and do it several times a day. Continue after you’ve started using crutches.

How to walk with crutches

Below are several methods you can use to walk with crutches. Talk with your medical provider about which method would be best for you at the various points in your recovery.

Weight-bearing 3-point gait

To put a minimum amount of weight on your bad leg, move both your crutches and your bad leg forward as a unit. Then, put most of your body weight on the crutches and bring your good leg forward.

Non-weight-bearing 3-point gait

To keep your injured leg off the floor, position both crutches ahead of you and lean on them. Swing both legs through the crutches. For a fast pace, swing your good leg through beyond the crutches. For a slower, more stable pace, swing your good leg to a point just behind the crutches.

Swing-to gait

Position the crutches 8 to 10 inches ahead of you. Swing your leg to a point just behind crutches.

Swing-through gait

Position the crutches 8 to 10 inches ahead of you. Use your arm and shoulder muscles to swing your body through the crutches and bring your feet down 8 to 10 inches ahead of the crutches. This method provides a fast pace.

Negotiating Stairs

The important point to remember is to go **up** with the good leg and go **down** with the bad leg.

How to go up stairs

1. Tuck both crutches under your strong side arm and use the handrail to support your weight on your injured side.
2. Lean forward slightly and swing your good leg up to the next step. Then lift your body weight by straightening the hip and knee of your good leg as you do in normal stair climbing.

Alternate methods for going up stairs

- ◆ If your balance is good and you’re using 2 crutches, you can support your weight on crutches by swinging your good leg up to the upper step, and then moving the crutches up to the same step.
- ◆ Alternatively, you can sit down on the bottom step, place your hands on the next step up, and by supporting your weight on your hands, move from step to step on your bottom.

How to go down stairs

With the crutches on your good leg side and your opposite hand on the railing:

1. Stand on your good leg leaving your injured leg behind on step above.
2. Bend forwards slightly and move your crutches down a step.
3. Support your body weight with the crutches on your good side and the handrail on your injured side and swing your good leg down. Keep your head and shoulders back to prevent your center of balance from pitching forward.

Alternate methods for going down stairs

- ◆ If your balance is good, you can stand on your good leg, put the crutches on the step below, transfer your weight to the crutches and bring your good leg down to the lower step.
- ◆ Alternatively, holding the crutches you can sit down on the top step and move from step to step on your bottom.

Helpful advice when you’re on crutches

- ◆ Take up any throw rugs you have on your floors or tack them down
- ◆ Watch for small objects on the floor that can throw your crutches off balance
- ◆ Hold self-closing doors open with one crutch
- ◆ Avoid revolving doors

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