

Using Crutches Safely

Crutches take the weight off an injured leg or foot while it heals and keep you balanced as you walk.

“It’s important to use crutches correctly so that you prevent any further injury or falls. First, we want to get the right fit.”

Stand up tall and place the crutches under your arms. Leave a two-finger width space between the top of the crutch and your armpit. Your wrists should be even with the handgrips. Your elbows should bend about 30 degrees with your hands on the grips. To walk, move your crutches forward. Swing your injured leg forward slightly as if you were about to take a step. Then, take a step with your uninjured leg, supporting your weight on your arms.

“You want to make sure that you support your weight using your hands and arms, and not your armpits. You also want to make sure that you have a friend nearby when you’re starting in case you lose your balance or need some help.”

To sit down, move backwards toward the chair or bed until you feel it against your leg. Move both crutches to the injured side and hold them in one hand. Reach with the other hand for nearby surface such as a table or armrest. Let your injured leg slide out in front of you as you sit down. To stand up, move both crutches to the injured side. Move the injured leg forward. Use the non-injured leg and both arms to push yourself up to standing.

Navigating stairs with crutches can be especially challenging. To climb stairs safely, get as close to the first step as possible. Place both crutches under one armpit and grab the railing with your other hand. Step up with the uninjured leg. Bring your crutches up to the step you’re now standing on and repeat the process.

To go down stairs, hold the handrail with one hand and your crutches in the other. Bring your injured leg forward and move your crutches to the next step down. Using your arms to support you, step down with the uninjured leg. To reduce the risk of falling, keep stairs and floors throughout the house free of clutter. Remove rugs, cords, or other objects that could cause you to trip. And use a backpack or fanny pack for items so your hands are free while you’re walking.

“By taking a few precautions and practicing, you’ll learn how to use the crutches safely and be more mobile. Don’t worry, it will take some time, but you’ll get the hang of it.”