Using your crutches safely

Be Sure Your Crutches Fit You

- Make sure the crutch tips, grips and pads are in place on the crutches before using them.
- Adjust the crutches for your height. The top of the crutch should be 1 to 2 inches below your armpit.
- Your crutch tips should be 2 to 3 inches out to the side of your feet, so you do not trip on your crutches.
- There should be a slight bend in your elbow when holding onto the crutches.
- Keep your elbows close to your sides to help keep the crutches against your chest.
- The pressure or weight goes on your hands and not on your armpits. Nerve damage can result if weight is placed on the armpits for a long period of time.

Preventing Falls

- Clean the crutch tips to make sure that they are free of dirt and stones.
- When walking on carpet, you must pick up your crutches and injured leg more than when you walk on tile or linoleum floors. Put away all throw rugs on the floor to keep from falling.
- Take your time and do not try to walk too fast.
- Keep your head up and look ahead. Do not look at your feet when walking.

Carrying Objects

Use care if you carry objects while using crutches. Suggestions to make this easier include:

- Wearing clothes with pockets or a pocket pack around your waist.
- Using a backpack. Be careful not to overload it, which can put you off balance.

Walking with crutches

- Place the crutches about 12 inches in front of you and 2 to 3 inches wider than your body on each side. The crutches and your feet will be in the shape of a triangle.
- Lean your weight forward as you push down on the hand grips. Put your weight on your hands and your good leg, not your armpits.

Let your body swing forward, landing on your good leg. Move the crutches forward again.
Weight bearing

You may need to limit the weight you put on your leg, based on your injury or surgery. There are different levels of weight bearing. Follow the order from your doctor or therapist.

- **Non-Weight Bearing (NWB)**
  - Place no weight on your injured leg.
  - While you stand or walk, you must hold your injured leg off the floor. Do not touch the floor with your injured leg.

- **Touch-Down Weight Bearing (TDWB)**
  - When you stand or walk, you may only touch the floor for balance with the ball of your foot.
  - Imagine you have an egg under your foot that you are not to crush.

- **Partial Weight Bearing (PWB)**
  - When you stand or walk, you may place some of your body weight on your injured leg.
  - Your doctor will decide on the amount of weight. Often it is less than half your body weight.

- **Weight bearing as tolerated (WBAT)**
  - Put only as much weight as feels comfortable on your injured leg when walking or standing. Let pain be your guide. If you feel pain, place less weight on the leg.
Standing up

- Put both crutches on your injured side.
- Lean forward and push off with your arm from the chair.
- Slowly stand up and more your crutches under both arms.

Sitting down

- Back up to the chair.
- Remove the crutches and place both of them together on your injured side.
- Hold onto the hand grips with one hand. Use your other hand to hold onto the arm rest or edge of the chair.
- Slowly sit down.
Stairs

Do not attempt to climb stairs or curbs until you have complete confidence in using your crutches. For safety reasons, you can sit down and scoot up and down the steps on your bottom if needed.

If you have a rail, put both crutches under one arm and hold onto the rail for safety.

Going Up Stairs with or without a Railing

- Keep the crutches on the stair you are standing on.
- Support your weight between your crutches and the railing, or between the crutches if there is no railing.
- Step up onto the higher step with your good leg. Let the injured leg trail behind.
- Straighten your good leg and bring the crutches and your injured leg up.

Going Down Stairs with or without Railing

- Put the crutches on the lower step, while putting your injured foot forward.
- Support your weight between your crutches and the railing, or between the crutches if there is no railing.
- Move your good foot to the lower step.
Getting in and out of a car

Follow your weight bearing limit as you get into and out of the car.

Getting In

- Have someone open the door and move the seat back as far as they can.
- Stand with your back toward the car.
- Put both crutches in one hand and reach back to hold the dash, car frame, or seat with the other hand.
- Back up until you feel the car frame. Grab the back rest with one hand and crutch hand grips with the other hand.
- Slowly sit down using your good leg to bear your weight. Tip your head to avoid bumping it.
- Put the heel of your good leg on the car frame and push back.
- Move across the seat until your injured leg can be swung into the car.
- Bring your crutches into the car, or ask someone to help you.

Getting Out

- Open the door and move the seat back as far as you can. Put both crutches outside the car in one hand.
- Hold onto the seat and slowly turn yourself toward the door.
- Carefully take both feet out of the car. Hold onto the door frame or seat back with one hand and the hand grips of the crutches with the other hand. Tip your head to avoid bumping it.
- Slowly stand up using your good leg to bear your weight. Move your crutches under both arms.

Talk to your doctor or health care team if you have any questions about your care.