

How to Use Crutches

Step-by-step instructions and safety tips

This handout gives instructions on how to safely use crutches to help your recovery and healing.

Fitting Your Crutches

- Adjust your crutches for your height. The top of the crutch should be 1 to 2 inches below your armpit.
- Make sure your elbows are slightly bent. When you walk, the pressure should be on your hands, NOT your armpits.

Standing Up

- Slide to the edge of the chair, with your affected leg straight out in front of you.
- Hold both crutches in one hand, on your affected side.
- To stand up, lean forward and push down on your crutches and your foot on your strong side.
- Check your balance.
- Put your crutches under your arms, 1 at a time.

Sitting Down

- Back up to the chair until you feel the edge of the chair seat on the back of your legs.
- Place both crutches in your hand on your affected side.
- Reach back for the chair with your other hand.
- Lower yourself slowly into the seat. Be careful not to put too much weight on your affected leg.



*Do **not** put any weight on your affected leg when you stand up from sitting.*



When walking with crutches, put the crutch tips about 2 to 3 inches out to the side and about 1 foot ahead of you.

Walking

- Follow the instructions on page 1 under “Your Doctor’s Orders” about how much weight to put on your leg.
- Place the crutch tips about 2 to 3 inches out to the side and about 1 foot ahead of you.
- Step forward with your affected leg.
- Step forward with your strong leg, bringing it past your affected leg. At the same time, push down on the handgrips.

Climbing Stairs

Do **not** climb stairs until you can use your crutches well. Until then, if you need to go up or down stairs, you can sit down and scoot on your bottom.

If the stairs have a railing, hold onto the railing on one side and put both crutches under the other arm – it is safer that way.

If someone is helping you on the stairs, they should:

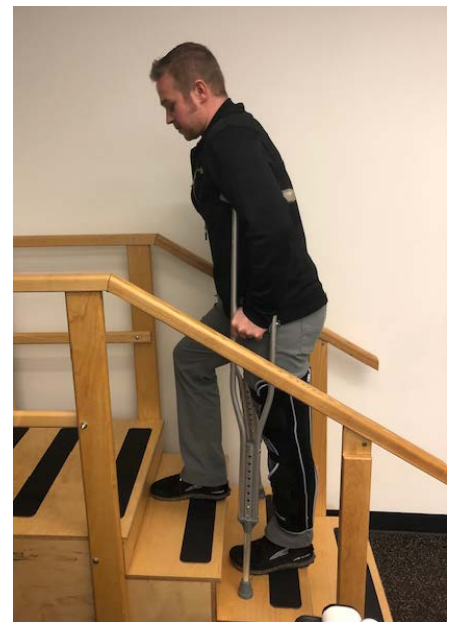
- Stand behind you when you go up the stairs
- Stand in front of you when you come down the stairs
- Support your trunk and body
- **Not** hold onto your hand

Going Up Stairs

- Place your weight on your crutches and step up with your strong leg.
- Bring your affected leg and your crutch tips up to the same step.
- Repeat for every stair step.

Going Down Stairs

- Put the tips of both crutches on the step below you.
- Step down with your affected leg.
- Push down on your crutches and slowly lower your strong leg.
- Repeat for every stair step.



Step up with your strong leg first when going up stairs with crutches.



Put the crutch tips on the step below first when going down stairs with crutches.

Safety Tips

- When you are walking, do not look at your feet. Keep your head up and watch where you are going. Check your balance often.
- Do not walk too fast.
- Remove throw rugs and clear walkways in your home to avoid slipping and falling.
- Clean the tips of your crutches often to make sure they are free of dirt and stones. Also check the tips for wear.
- Remember that you need to lift your crutches and your affected leg higher when you are walking on carpet.

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

UWMC Physical Therapy:

- Weekdays 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., call 206.598.4830.
- On weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Physical Therapist on call.

UW Medicine Sports Medicine Clinic: Call 206.598.DAWG (3294) and press 2 during clinic hours:

- Monday-Thursday: 6:30 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- Friday: 6:30 a.m. to 5 p.m.
- Saturday: 8 a.m. to 12 noon
- Sunday: Closed