



Using Crutches

**Crutch adjustment**

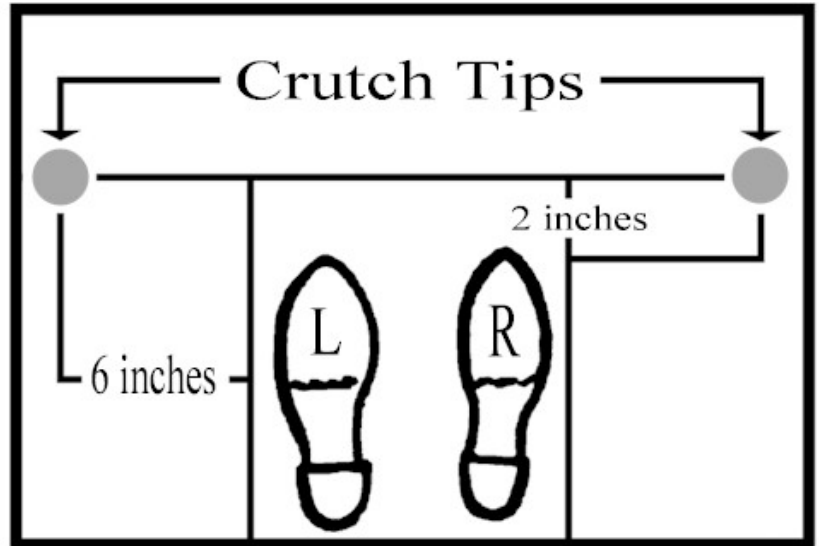
With feet and crutches in the position shown, you should be able to place 2-3 fingers between your underarm and the top of the crutches. While standing up straight and down in this position, the handgrips should be at wrist level. Your elbows should be bent at approximately 20 degrees.

**Crutch stance**

Stand straight with your elbows bent, supporting your weight on the handgrips. Do not rest your weight through your armpits onto the pads. This can cause "crutch palsy," a typically temporary numbness in the arms and hands.

**Standing up/sitting down**

Bring both crutches to the side of the injured leg. Use the hand on the injured side to bear weight on the handgrips; place the other hand on the chair armrest to help support your weight as you stand up or sit down.



**Gait pattern – partial weight bearing**

Step forward with both crutches and the injured leg, bearing weight on the 3 points at the same time; then step forward with the good leg. You should bear most of your weight through your hands to keep the weight off the injured leg. Then with your weight on your good leg, move your crutches and injured leg forward together at the same time.

If the physician has told you not to bear any weight on the injured leg, then you will use the crutches and hop on the uninjured leg. Don't take too big of steps, and be careful with your balance!

**Going up and down steps/stairs/curbs**

**Going Up:** The uninjured or good leg steps up first as you bear weight through the crutches. The injured leg follows with the crutches. Make sure that you are close to the step before you start and that the injured leg clears the step as you step up.

**Going Down:** Place the crutches on the step below, and then step down with the injured leg. The good leg then follows. Make sure the crutch tips are not too close to the edge of the step.

If a handrail is available, then the crutches can be used as one on the opposite side of the handrail. The sequence remains the same as without using a handrail.

**Remember: up with the good, down with the bad**

**Precautions**

- If the crutches are not new, check the handgrips or rubber crutch tips for signs of wear or cracks. You generally can purchase replacements at a drugstore, discount store, or medical supply company.
- Go slowly on uneven surfaces such as sidewalks, gravel driveways, grass, etc.
- Be careful while walking over thick carpet. The crutch tips may catch on the carpet, causing you to pitch forward.
- If your crutch tips get wet outside, dry them off before walking on tile or linoleum floors inside.
- Pick up small throw rugs around your apartment or house. Watch out for objects or cords lying on the floor.
- Wear supportive, non-slip shoes with low heels; avoid sandals or house slippers since they can fly off.

If you are a registered University of Illinois student and you have questions or concerns, or need to make an appointment, please call: **Dial-A-Nurse at 333-2700**

If you are concerned about any difference in your treatment plan and the information in this handout, you are advised to contact your health care provider.

Visit the McKinley Health Center Web site at: <http://www.mckinley.uiuc.edu>