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Patient Instructions

Crutches

YOUR DOCTOR WANTS YOU TO USE CRUTCHES TO REDUCE OR ELIMINATE THE AMOUNT OF WEIGHT YOU PUT ON YOUR INJURED LEG OR FOOT. USING CRUTCHES HELPS TO SPEED THE HEALING PROCESS BY TAKING PRESSURE OFF YOUR INJURED BONE AS YOU STAND AND WALK.

In Selecting a Pair of Crutches, As Yourself These Questions:

Are the crutches in good condition? Make sure that your crutches have rubber tips to prevent sliding. Also make sure they have padded underarm pieces for comfort.

Are the crutches the right size? Stand with your crutches and place their tips about 6 inches (15 centimeters) from the sides of your feet. Check to see if the underarm pieces come to about 1 to 1 ½ inches (roughly 2 finger widths or 4 centimeters) below your armpits. If the underarm pieces touch your armpits, the crutches are too long. Ask the doctor to shorten them. Remember: You should support your weight with the handgrips, not the crutch tops.

Do they cause problems? Support yourself by distributing your weight on your hands, wrists, and arms. If you feel any tingling or numbness in the side of your chest, below your armpits, or in your upper arms, you are probably using the crutches improperly or you may need to adjust their size or fit. It is important to use your crutches correctly, otherwise they may damage the nerves in your armpits or palms.

Learning To Walk With Crutches: Learning to walk with crutches requires time and patience. Use one of these techniques.

Crutch Walking With Partial Weight on Your Injured Leg: The doctor may allow you to place some of your weight on the injured leg. To do this, follow the instructions. They discuss how to walk with crutches if your right leg is injured. (If it is your left leg that is injured, place most of your weight on your right leg and adapt the instructions. You may want to draw the step patterns yourself.)

1. Stand straight, with shoulders relaxed and your arms slightly bent. Lean your body slightly forward, distributing your weight between the crutches and your uninjured leg. You can put some weight on your injured leg.

2. Move the crutches forward. Then move your injured leg up to meet them.
3. Put some weight on your injured leg as you move your uninjured leg ahead of the crutches. Now repeat these steps to keep walking.

Crutch Walking With No Weight on Your Injured Leg: If the doctor says you should not put any weight on your injured leg while walking with crutches, use the method below. These instructions show how to walk with crutches if your left leg is injured. (If your right leg is injured, rest your weight on your left leg, and adapt the instructions. You may want to draw the step patterns for yourself.)

1. Stand straight with all your weight on your uninjured leg. Relax your shoulders. Hold the foot of your injured leg off the floor by flexing your knee slightly. Balancing all your weight on the crutches, position the uninjured leg's foot so it is even with the crutch tips, slightly in front of you. Use the uninjured leg and the crutches to support your weight as you lean your body slightly forward.
2. Shift all your weight to the uninjured leg and move the crutches forward together, swinging the injured leg along with them. Don't put any weight on your injured leg!
3. Now shift all your weight back to the crutches via your hands and wrists, swing your uninjured leg forward, and again place all your weight on this leg – using the crutches to keep your balance. To keep walking, repeat steps 2 and 3.

Using Crutches On Stairs and With Chairs: Climbing stairs and getting into and out of a chair with your crutches may seem hard, but put yourself at ease and do these maneuvers slowly at first. The following guidelines will help.

How to Climb Stairs: If the banister is on your left side and your right leg is injured, follow the directions below:

1. Standing at the bottom of the stairs, shift both crutches to your right hand. Then grasp the banister firmly with your left hand. Using your right hand, carefully support your weight on the crutches.
2. Next, push down on your crutches and hop onto the first step, using just your uninjured leg. Lift your injured leg as you go. Support your weight on that leg as you continue to grasp the banister tightly. Then swing the crutches up onto the first step. Now hop onto the second step, using your uninjured leg. Repeat this procedure, but go slowly. To get down the stairs, reverse these maneuvers. But always advance the crutches and your injured leg first. Remember: Your strong leg goes up first and comes down last.

How to Sit Down:

1. Using your crutches, walk over to the chair. Turn around and step backward until the back of your uninjured leg touches the chair's front edge.
2. Keeping your weight on your uninjured leg, transfer both crutches to the hand on the same side as your injured leg. Support most of your weight on your crutches. Next, reach back with your other hand and grasp the chair arm.
3. Carefully sit down, making sure to keep your weight off your injured leg. Keep your crutches next to the chair.

How to Get Up:

1. Move your uninjured leg backward until it touches the back of the chair's front edge. While you are still sitting, take the crutches and stand them upright.
2. Using the hand on the same side as your injured leg, hold onto the handgrips. With your other hand, hold onto the chair arm.
3. Slide forward with your uninjured leg slightly under the chair. Push yourself onto your uninjured leg. Once you are standing, transfer a crutch to your uninjured side. You can also push yourself up while grasping the handgrip of a crutch in each hand.