

# Proper Use of Crutches

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## Why Use Crutches?

Crutches help **keep weight off an injured leg, foot, or ankle**, allowing proper healing while maintaining mobility. Using them correctly **prevents further injury, reduces pain, and improves balance**.

## Adjusting Your Crutches

- ✓ **Crutch height** - Adjust so the top is **2 inches (2-3 finger widths) below your armpit** when standing upright.
- ✓ **Handgrip height** - Adjust so your **elbows bend slightly (15-30 degrees) when holding the grips**.
- ✓ **Avoid resting your weight on your armpits** - This can cause nerve damage.

## Walking with Crutches (Non-Weight Bearing)

**Stand upright** with crutches under each arm.

**Move both crutches forward** about **12 inches**.

**Swing your injured leg forward**, keeping it off the ground.

**Step forward with your good leg**, placing weight on your hands, not your armpits.

Repeat the process, moving slowly and carefully.

## Walking with Crutches (Partial Weight-Bearing)

**Move both crutches and your injured leg forward together.**

**Step forward with your good leg**, placing only partial weight on the injured side.

Repeat the movement while keeping a steady rhythm.

## Sitting & Standing with Crutches

✓ **To sit down:** Back up to the chair until you feel it behind your legs. Hold both crutches in one hand, use the other hand to lower yourself slowly.

✓ **To stand up:** Hold both crutches in one hand, push off the chair with the other hand, then place the crutches under your arms once balanced.

## Using Stairs with Crutches

### Going UP Stairs (Good Leg First)

- ✓ Step up first with your **good leg**.
- ✓ Bring crutches up to the same step.
- ✓ Keep your injured leg off the ground.

### Going DOWN Stairs (Crutches First)

- ✓ Place **crutches down first**.

- ✓ Step down with your **injured leg first**, followed by your good leg.
- ✓ Use a **handrail for support** if available.

**If unsure or unsteady, sit and scoot up or down the stairs.**

## **Safety Tips**

- ✓ **Keep crutch tips dry and slip-resistant** (replace worn-out tips).
- ✓ **Move slowly and avoid wet, uneven, or slippery surfaces.**
- ✓ **Do NOT lean on your armpits** - Support weight with your hands.
- ✓ **Wear supportive shoes** with good traction.
- ✓ **Keep floors clear of clutter** to prevent falls.

## **When to Call Your Doctor**

**Severe pain or swelling in the injured limb**  
**Numbness or tingling in hands from crutch use**  
**Crutches feel too uncomfortable or unstable**

## **Bottom Line**

- ✓ **Adjust crutches properly** to avoid injury.
- ✓ **Support weight with hands, not armpits.**
- ✓ **Use the "good leg first" method on stairs.**
- ✓ **Move slowly and stay safe to prevent falls.**

**Click here for more orthopedic patient information.**

**Contact a Key West orthopedic clinic or reach out to Dr. Jason Pirozzolo.**