After surgery or injury to your leg, you may need to use crutches to decrease pressure on the affected leg to allow healing and to reduce pain when walking.

This brochure explains how to use your crutches in the safest possible manner.

Adjusting crutches for comfort

The height of the crutches and the position of the handgrips should be adjusted to suit individual dimensions.

When standing upright with correct shoulder and back posture, there should be a 3 finger gap (3 - 4cm) between your armpit and the top of your crutch.

The most stable position you can adopt with your crutches is to form a TRIANGLE with your unaffected leg and the crutches.

The handgrip should be positioned so that your elbows are slightly bent when standing relaxed. When walking or resting, your body weight should be taken through your hands and forearms, not your armpit. You should apply only enough pressure sideways on the crutches to keep it close to your body (much like holding a rolled newspaper under your arms).

CAUTION

Upward pressure into your armpit can potentially damage nerves and blood vessels.
DO NOT rest your underarms on the top of the crutches.

After a fracture or leg joint surgery, there may be restrictions with how much weight you can put through your affected leg.

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STANDING UP

- Hold both crutches on your injured side using the handgrips.
- The other hand should be positioned to push off from the bed/chair.
- Place your injured foot forward.
- Lean your body forwards and stand up.

SITTING DOWN

- Step back close enough to feel the bed/chair behind your knees.
- Transfer both crutches to your affected side, holding onto the handgrips.
- Reach for the arm of the chair with your free hand.
- Place your injured foot forward.
- Lean your body forwards and slowly lower yourself down.

Walking with Crutches

Partial weight-bearing means that you may take part of weight through your injured leg. Your doctor or physiotherapist will instruct you on how much weight to take.

- Place both crutches about a step in front of you to form a stable triangle.
- Place your affected leg forward to the level of the crutches.
- Begin the step by sharing the weight between your hands and your affected leg.
- Step the good leg through.

Non weight-bearing means that you are not allowed to put any weight through your affected leg for a specified period of time.

- Hold your affected leg off the ground.
- Place both crutches about a step in front of you to form a stable triangle.
- Take your body weight through your hands, hop forward to the level of your crutches.
- As you improve, you may be able to hop past the level of your crutches.

Turning Tips

✔ Always turn towards your good / uninjured side.
✔ This ensures that if you overbalance, your strong leg will support you.
✔ Step around slowly and evenly to turn.
✔ Do not twist on your leg when turning.

This procedure applies to getting on and off car seats and seats on public transport.
**Stairs / Curbs / Gutters**

- Start close to the edge of the step.
- Ensure that the wing-nuts on the lower part of the crutches face away from the step so they can’t catch.
- Use a handrail on one side if available. With the other hand, you can either hold both crutches together across the handgrips from the outside or hold one crutch at right angles to the one you are using.

**DO NOT** try to use two handrails as they are often too far apart to adequately lift yourself and you will be left without crutches when you reach the top / bottom of the stairs.

**STEPPING UP**

1. Lock your arms and shoulders to support your body weight as you slowly hop your good leg up onto the next step.
2. Push through your good leg to bring your injured leg up beside the good leg.
3. Support your weight on your good leg as you bring your crutches up.
4. Get your balance before going onto the next step.

If using the handrail to keep your balance, always make sure that you keep your hands lower than your body when going down the stairs.

- Avoid walking on smooth or / and wet surfaces (eg: wet tiles).
- Take care on uneven or steep surfaces.
- Keep rubber tips clean (free from mud, lint, small stones).
- If rubber tips become worn, return to the hospital to replace them.

**PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT**

Physiotherapist: ________________
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Revised January 2008