

Learning to Use Crutches

To keep weight off of your leg, you'll need to use crutches. The following information will help you use your crutches correctly.

Weightbearing Restrictions

Your doctor will let you know how much weight you can put on your affected leg when walking. Here's a guide to terms your doctor will use:

- Nonweightbearing (NWB) means that your foot on the affected side should never touch the ground.
- Toe-touch weightbearing (TTWB) means you can place the toes of the affected foot on the floor to help with balance. But do not put your body weight on that leg.
- Partial weightbearing (PWB) means you can put some of your weight down on the affected side. Your doctor will tell you exactly how much weight is OK.
- Weightbearing as tolerated (WBAT) means you can step down with as much weight as is comfortable for you.

Your weightbearing restrictions are as follows:

Left leg

Right leg

Fitting Your Crutches

For your safety and to prevent pressure and nerve damage, your crutches must fit you well. Here's how to check the fit.

- Stand tall on the unaffected leg and place the tips of the crutches about 6 inches to the side and 6 inches in front of your foot.
- There should be about 2 inches of space between the tops of the crutches and your armpits. This usually means setting the crutches to 3 inches greater than user's height.
- The handgrips on the crutches should be level with your wrists.

Using Your Crutches

To get up from a chair:

- Sit on the edge of the seat, with your strong foot close to the chair and your affected leg farther in front of you.

- With one hand on the handgrips of the crutches and the other hand on the arm of the chair, push up with your arms to help you stand. Your crutches should not be under your arms yet.
- Put your weight on your strong leg as you get up and follow weightbearing restrictions.
- Position your crutches with one crutch under each arm.

To sit down on a chair:

- Back up until you feel the edge of the chair against the backs of your legs.
- With your affected leg forward, take your crutches out from under your arms.
- Keep one hand on your crutches and reach for your chair with the other hand.
- Slowly sit down in the chair.

Walking with your crutches:

- When standing with your crutches, bend your elbows slightly, and relax your shoulders. Support your weight with your hands, not your armpits.
- Move your crutches forward, either at the same time or one at a time. If some weightbearing is allowed, you can then step forward with your affected leg.
- Step to the crutch tips with your strong leg.
- Repeat the above steps.

To walk upstairs:

- Move your strong leg onto the first step.
- Next move both crutches and then your affected leg up to the same step.
- If the stairs have a handrail, use it. Put both crutches under your arm that is opposite the railing and follow the same procedure as that outlined above. Handrails offer better support than crutches and should be used, when available.

To walk downstairs:

- Slowly lower both crutches and then your affected leg onto and the first step down.
- Lean on your crutches, and slowly lower your strong leg onto the same step.
- If the stairs have a handrail, use it. Put both crutches under the arm opposite the railing, or hand one crutch to a helper and follow the same procedure as outlined above.

Things to Remember

- Make sure your crutches are in good repair. (Keep tips free of stones and dirt. Keep bolts and screws tight.)
- Never use your armpits to support your weight.
- Be careful of slipping, and watch out for pets underfoot, throw rugs, and icy or wet sidewalks.
- Wear comfortable shoes with soles that grip.
- Crutches are not toys — don't let anyone play with them.

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If you are a Gillette patient with urgent questions or concerns, please contact Telehealth Nursing at [651-229-3890](#).