

## UNIVERSITY STUDENT HEALTH SERVICES • Fact Sheet

**CRUTCH WALKING INSTRUCTIONS****Fitting the crutches:**

1. There should be two to three finger-widths of space between your underarms & the tops of the crutches. Have another person measure while you are standing up straight, with the crutch tips just to the outside of your toes.
2. Adjust the hand pieces so that your elbows bend at a 20-30° angle at rest.

**Walking:**

1. Use your hands, arms, and good leg for weight-bearing, **not your underarms!** Permanent nerve damage can result if you lean your weight on your underarms.
2. Put the crutch tips 12-15 inches ahead of your feet, straighten your elbows while leaning forward, then swing or step between the stationary crutches. Your injured leg should always be in line with your crutches. Only the good leg works independently of the crutches.
3. After moving through, return the crutches to their starting position, and begin the next step. Look straight ahead when you walk.
4. Take slow, small steps until you become used to crutch walking.

**Sitting down and standing up from a chair:**

1. Keep your injured leg or ankle away from you.
2. Hold both crutches in one hand at the hand pieces.
3. To sit down: Bend forward slightly, holding tightly to the chair's arms, then lower your body.
4. To stand up: Hold on to the chair's arms and push up, then put your crutches in place.

**Stairs: Remember "Up with the good, down with the bad."**

1. To go up stairs: Move your good leg up to the next step, then move the crutches and your injured leg up to the next step.
2. To go down stairs: Move the crutches to the lower step, then your injured leg to the lower step. Finally, move your good leg down to the lower step.
3. If you feel unsteady, sit on the steps, and raise or lower your body one step at a time.
4. If there is a railing, put one hand on the railing and both crutches under the other arm.

**Safety Precautions:**

1. Your crutches should have large rubber suction tips.
2. Arm and hand pieces should have foam rubber pads to relieve pressure.
3. Wear well-fitting flat shoes with non-skid soles. Do not go barefoot. Also avoid wearing flip-flops, sandals, slippers, sling-backs, and high heels.
4. Avoid wearing anything long or loose that could get tangled with your crutches. Wear clothes with large pockets for carrying your belongings, or use a backpack. Do not attempt to carry things in your hands.
5. Walk on surfaces that are clean, dry, and well-lit. Take up scatter rugs in your home.
6. Do NOT drink alcohol or use any drugs not prescribed or recommended by your healthcare provider. These may increase your risk of falling.