

CRUTCHES AND WALKING DEVICES

After foot or ankle surgery or an injury, patients are usually required to be non-weight bearing on the operated foot or ankle for some period of time. Crutches are typically the ideal piece of equipment that patients need to accomplish this post-operatively or during rehabilitation. When patient begin to put weight and pressure on their foot again, after non-weight bearing status from their surgery, crutches assist patients in getting back to full weight bearing status more rapidly.

For patients who *cannot* use crutches due to:

1. Limited upper body and arm strength
2. Difficulty with balance
3. Are designated as a slip/fall risk
4. Prefer not to use crutches



Other assistive devices are available. These require a bit more sizing and training and are available at most major medical supply stores. Patients should inquire and be comfortable operating these alternative devices **prior to your procedure(s)**. A physician's order or prescription may be required for dispensing and training of these devices. Patients should also be aware that, larger wheeled devices produce limitations for the patients, with stairs and driving, for example.

1. Knee Scooters



2. Walkers (without wheels)



3. Wheels chairs



The importance of proper fitting and training of crutches is essential. Serious bodily injuries and accidents can occur from improper sizing and training. Some of the more common complications that can occur to patient using crutches improperly are:

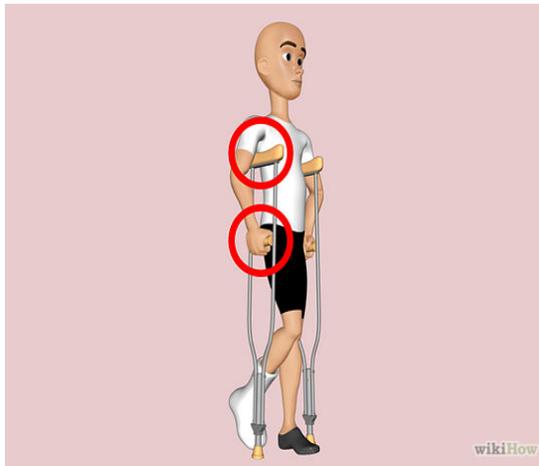
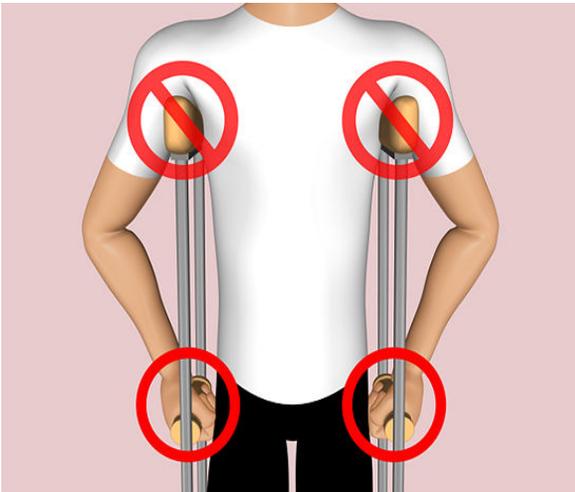
- Slip and Falls
- Brachial Plexus (under arm) or Median Nerve compression (carpal tunnel) syndromes may occur.
 - Damage may be temporary or permanent
- Bruising from improper sizing and pad placement.

Crutches are conveniently offered here. Please ask our Front Desk for pricing. Replacement crutch tips, cushioned hand grips and arm cushions are conveniently offered here as well. Regardless of where you obtain your crutches, it is important that you know how to properly operate the device to avoid injury. Please read the instructions below on how to use crutches properly as well as information to help you maintain non-weight bearing on your affected foot or ankle while sitting and using stairs.

INSTRUCTIONS ON HOW TO USE CRUTCHES, WALKING, SITTING AND STAIR

Proper Positioning

1. The top of your crutches should reach between 1 and 1.5 inches below your armpits while you stand up straight.
2. The handgrips of the crutches should be even with the **top** of your hip line.
3. Your elbows should bend a bit when you use the hand grips.
4. Hold the top of the crutches tightly to your sides, and **use your hands to absorb the weight**. Don't let the tops of the crutches press into your armpits.



Walking

1. Lean forward slightly and put your crutches about one foot ahead of you, between the crutches.
2. Begin your step as if you were going to use the injured foot or leg, but shift your weight to the crutches instead of the injured foot. Your body swings forward
3. Finish the step normally with your non-injured leg. When the non-injured leg is on the ground, move your crutches ahead in preparation for the next step.
4. Keep focused on where you are walking, not on your feet.



Sitting

1. Back up to a sturdy chair.
2. Put your injured foot in front of you and both crutches in one hand. Use the other hand to feel for the seat of your chair.
3. Slowly lower yourself into it. Lean your crutches upside down in a handy location. (Crutches tend to fall over when they are stood on their tips.)
4. To stand up, inch yourself to the front of the chair. Hold both crutches in the hand on your good leg side. Push yourself up and stand on the good leg.



Stairs

To walk up and down stairs *with crutches*, **you need to be both strong and flexible.**

1. Use the crutches under both arms.
2. When you're going up, lead with your good foot, keeping the injured foot raised behind you. **(Going upstairs, "Angels go up (lead with your good foot))**
3. When you're going down, hold your injured foot up in front, and hop down each stair on your good foot. **(Going downstairs, "Devils go down (lead with your bad foot))**
4. Take it one step at a time. You may want someone to help you, at least at first.

An easier way is to sit on the stairs and inch yourself up and down each step.

- a. Start by sitting on the lowest stair with your injured leg out in front.
- b. Hold both crutches flat against the stairs in your opposite hand.
- c. Scoot your bottom up to the next step, using your free hand and good leg for support.
- d. Face the same direction when you go down the stairs this way.