



Department of Physical Therapy

## Using Your Crutches

### General Safety Tips

- Have someone nearby to help you until you feel confident using your crutches.
- Avoid crowds.
- Never carry anything when using crutches.
- Keep crutches slightly forward and to the side of your toes when standing and walking. Having a wide base of support will help you keep your balance.
- Support your body weight by pressing down on the hand grips with your hands. Squeeze the crutch pad between your arms and your ribs when standing and walking.
- Never lean on your crutches. Doing so could damage the nerves and blood vessels under your arms.
- Clean the tips of your crutches daily to prevent dirt and dust buildup, which can cause crutches to slip. Make sure the screws are tight.
- Make sure your floors at home are clutter-free.
- Turn on the lights if you get up at night.
- Avoid walking on small rugs, which can move and make you slip.
- Do not let pets jump on you or get in your way when you are standing or walking.
- Continue to use your crutches and maintain the weight bearing as instructed, until your surgeon tells you otherwise.

### How to Adjust Your Crutches

To use crutches safely and correctly, they must be adjusted to fit your height and arm length. Follow the steps below for a perfect fit.



- Stand with your crutches under your arms. The tips of the crutches should be 6 to 8 inches forward and to the side of your toes.
- The crutch pads should be 2 finger widths (about 1 ½ inches) below your armpit.
- The hand grips should be level with the bend in your wrist when your arms are at your sides. When you hold on to the hand grips, there should be a slight bend at your elbow.

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## How to Stand Up

- Place both crutches on your affected side and grasp both hand grips.
- Place your other hand on the arm or seat of the chair.
- Lean forward (bending at the hips). Push up from the chair using the hand grips, the chair and your non-affected leg.
- Once standing, check your balance. Then, place the crutches under your arms.



## How to Sit Down

- Back up toward the chair until your non-affected leg touches it.
- Check your balance. Then, move both crutches to your affected side by grasping both hand grips.
- Bend slightly at the hips, and then reach back for the arm or seat of the chair with your non-affected hand.
- Slowly lower yourself into the chair.



If you have any questions about this information, please call **(864) 797-1201**.