

## OrthoBethesda Therapy Services

### Getting Around Safely With Your Crutches

*(Partial Weight Bearing)*

Your physician will decide whether you are to be non weight bearing, toe-touch weight bearing, partial weight bearing, or weight bearing as tolerated on your surgical/injured leg. These instructions are specifically for patients that are **partial weight bearing (PWB)**. It is very important that you adhere to your weight-bearing instructions in order to avoid disrupting the healing process. The therapist will instruct you on the appropriate set-up and fitting of your crutches.

**Partial Weight Bearing (PWB)**: This designation will be accompanied by a percentage value, which indicates exactly how much weight you are able to support through the leg. For example, if you are 25% PWB, you may place 25% of your bodyweight through this leg. To get a feel for your PWB limit, you may place your surgical/injured leg onto a scale and shift your weight to that side. For example, a 200-pound patient that is allowed 50% PWB may place up to 100 pounds of weight through the surgical/injured leg.

#### Set Up and Fitting:

- Standing straight with your arm at your side, the crutch handle should align with the inside of your wrist.
- The height of the crutch should be adjusted so that there are 1-2 inches of space between the top of the crutch and your armpit.
  - This is roughly the width of two fingers.



## General Instructions and Tips:

- Use your crutches only as instructed. Place only the amount of weight through your surgical/injured leg as specified by the physician.
- Use your crutches for all walking and standing activities until your physician instructs you otherwise.
- Your weight should be placed through your hands by pushing down through the crutch handles.
- Never lean on your crutches.
  - *Resting your armpits on the crutches may cause nerve damage!*
- Always use both crutches. Using only one crutch may cause back problems.
- Place weight evenly on both crutches.
- Walk slowly and carefully.
- Have someone walk with you initially until you feel steady on your feet.
  - This is especially important when walking on unlevel/uneven surfaces or stairs.
- Remove loose rugs or other small objects from the floor in order to minimize the risk of tripping.
- Wear appropriately-fitted, low-heeled shoes. Do not wear slippers or high heels.
- Do not wear long, floor-length robes or gowns while using crutches.
- Avoid slippery and/or wet floors.
- Check the ground for objects that may cause crutches to slip out from under you.
- Check the crutches daily for cracks and/or loose screws. Replace worn tips and unsafe parts.
- When not in use, it is best to rest your crutches upside down. They are less likely to fall over this way.



## Walking:

1. Start by placing both crutches 1-2 inches to the outside of each foot and 6-12 inches in front of you.
2. Step your surgical/injured leg forward to meet the crutches.
3. Push down through the crutch handles in order to avoid placing too much weight through your surgical/injured leg, as you begin to swing your non-surgical/non-injured leg forward.
4. Maintaining your weight-bearing limitations, step forward with your non-surgical/non-injured leg, just in front of the crutches.



You may combine the first two steps if you feel comfortable; advance your non-surgical/non-injured leg and both crutches forward at the same time.



## Standing Up:

1. Scoot forward in the chair to make it easier to stand.
2. Hold both crutches in one hand, on the side of your surgical/injured leg.
3. Place both feet flat on the ground and place your free hand on the armrest (or seat) of the chair.
4. Lean forward at your hips, tighten your core muscles and then push down through both hands and both legs (*only place as much weight through the surgical/injured leg as specified by your physician*) in order to stand.
5. Once standing and steady, place one crutch under each arm.



## Sitting Down:

1. Position yourself so that the backs of your legs are touching the chair.
2. Hold both crutches in one hand, on the side of your surgical/injured leg.
3. Reach back with your free hand until you feel the armrest (or seat) of the chair.
4. Slowly lower yourself into the chair, making sure to only place as much weight through the surgical/injured leg as specified by your physician.



## Going Up Steps/Curbs:

1. Stand close to the surface you intend to go up.
2. Step up with your non-surgical/non-injured leg. (Push down through the crutch handles with your hands in order to avoid placing too much weight through the surgical/injured leg.)
3. Step up with your surgical/injured leg and both crutches.
4. If going up multiple steps, repeat this pattern until you have reached the top.



\*If there is a railing available to use, hold both crutches on the side of your body opposite the handrail and grab the handrail with your free hand. Step up with your non-surgical/non-injured leg, then bring your surgical/injured leg and both crutches up at the same time.



## Going Down Steps/Curbs:

1. Stand close to the edge of the surface you intend to go down.
2. Lower both crutches down to the step below.
3. Bring down your surgical/injured leg first.
4. Push down through the crutch handles, then step down with your non-surgical/non-injured leg.
5. If going down multiple steps, repeat this pattern until you have reached the bottom.



\*If there is a railing available to use, hold both crutches on the side of your body opposite the handrail and grab the handrail with your free hand. Lower the crutches down, step down with your surgical/injured leg, then step down with your non-surgical/non-injured leg.

