

OrthoBethesda Therapy Services

Getting Around Safely With Your Crutches

(Non 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 **non weight bearing (NWB)**. 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.

Non-Weight Bearing (NWB): Do not place any weight through the surgical/injured leg. This includes resting your feet or toes on the ground. While walking and sitting, make sure to keep your foot elevated off of the ground at all times.

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. Your surgical/injured leg should remain off of the ground at all times. This can be accomplished by bending your knee so that your foot is in the air behind you. (If you are wearing a brace that keeps your knee straight, bend your hip forward so that your leg is in the air in front of you.)
2. Start by placing both crutches 1-2 inches to the outside of each leg, and 6-12 inches in front of you.
3. Pushing down through the crutch handles with your hands, hop forward with your non-surgical/non-injured leg so that it lands in the center of both crutches.



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. Keeping your surgical/injured leg in the air in front of you the entire time, place the foot of your non-surgical/non-injured leg 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 your non-surgical/non-injured leg in order to stand.
5. Once standing and steady, place one crutch under each arm.
6. Remember to keep your surgical/injured leg raised in the air as you stand.



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, keeping your surgical/injured leg raised in the air while sitting.



Going Up Steps/Curbs:

1. Stand close to the surface you intend to go up.
2. Keep your surgical/injured leg raised in the air behind you so that the steps are not in the way.
3. Pushing down through the crutch handles with your hands, bring your non-surgical/non-injured leg up onto the step by hopping.
4. Shift your weight onto your non-surgical/non-injured leg and then bring both crutches up onto the step.
5. 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 and then bring the crutches up. Keep your surgical/injured leg in the air at all times.



Going Down Steps/Curbs:

1. Stand close to the end of the surface you intend to go down.
2. Keep your surgical/injured leg raised up in front of you so that the stairs are out of the way.
3. Lower both crutches down to the step below.
4. Pushing down through the crutch handles with your hands, bring your non-surgical/non-injured leg down to meet the crutches by hopping.
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 to the next step, then lower your non-surgical/non-injured leg. Keep your surgical/injured leg in the air at all times.

