

Use of Crutches

Adjusting Your Crutches

Before you are ready to use your crutches, you need to make sure they are properly adjusted to fit your body.

First, adjust the footpiece of the crutch to match your height. This is accomplished by using the height adjustment scale located at the bottom of each crutch. Push the metal buttons in on both sides and slide the footpiece until the button locks in the hole next to your height. Double-check to make sure the footpiece is secure.

Next, check and make sure the crutch fits comfortably with your body. When standing at a resting position, the arm rest should be on inch to an inch-and-a-half below your underarm. If this is not the case, you may need to readjust the footpiece slightly.

With your arm at rest, and your elbow slightly bent, your hand should wrap comfortably around the handgrip. If this does not feel comfortable, the height of the handgrip can be adjusted by loosening the wing nut, sliding out the screw and moving the handgrip to a comfortable level. Make sure the wing nut is secure once you have set the right level. Check and retighten wing nuts every day.

Standing with Your Crutches

The tripod stance is what provides your body with the most support and keeps weight off of your injured leg when standing still. Keep your good foot firmly on the ground and place the crutches in front of your body at a 45 degree angle to the good foot. Be careful not to move the crutches too far away or too close to your body since this will not provide the support you need.

Walking with Crutches

There are three main walks or "gaits" when using crutches. They are the "Four-Point Gait," the "Partial Weight-Bearing Three-Point Gait" and the "Three Point "Swing Through Gait." Your medical provider will tell you which one of these is best for your particular injury.

Four-Point Gait

This is most commonly used to provide assistance with walking when both legs are in a weakened condition. To use this gait, put the right crutch out and step with the left foot. Then put the left crutch out and step with your right foot. The pattern is right crutch-left foot and left crutch-right foot.

Partial Weight-Bearing Three-Point Gait

This is used when your injured foot can bear some weight, but you still need the assistance of crutches. To do this, put both crutches in front at a 45 degree angle, just like the tripod stance. Step with your bad foot up to the crutches and then step with your good foot past the crutches.

Three-Point Swing-Through Gait

This is used to keep all pressure off your injured lower extremity. Starting from the tripod stance, swing both feet through, placing your good foot in front of the crutches. Make sure you "swing through" so that you're giving your body the proper support when stopping.

When you are on stairs and no railing is available or you're at a curb use the following instructions.

Up:

1. Step up with the strong leg-weight should be on the hand grips. The weak/operated leg follows.
2. Put no weight on the weak/operated leg.
3. The crutches are brought up last. If you are casted, be sure your toes clear the steps before proceeding to the next step.

Down

To reverse the process, be sure that your toes are close to the edge of the stairs.

1. Place both crutches on the stair below.
2. Step down with the weak/operated leg (or just lower yourself if no weight allowed).
3. Push down on the hand grips and step down with the stronger leg.
4. Place the crutches down again and proceed.

If a railing is available, the following is often easier.

Up:

1. Place both crutches on the side opposite the railing.
2. Holding onto the railing and crutches, step up with the stronger leg.
3. Then bring up the weak/operated leg and crutches to the same step.
4. Continue to go up, always with the stronger leg first.

Down:

1. Place both crutches opposite the railing.
2. Bring the crutches down first.
3. Step down with the weak/operated leg.
4. Put the weight on the railing and crutches.
5. Next step down with the strong leg.

Health & Wellness Crutches

- You have been charged \$28.00 for these crutches.
- If the crutches are returned in usable condition within two weeks, the charge will be voided. Please call your medical provider if you need an extension.
- Crutches may be returned to the front desk at Health & Wellness during regular business hours.
- Call Health & Wellness if you have additional questions.



Health & Wellness

603-862-9355 • unh.edu/health • @UNHHealth



ACCREDITATION ASSOCIATION
for AMBULATORY HEALTH CARE, INC.