



Using crutches

You have been given crutches to take weight off an injured leg while it heals. This sheet explains how to use them safely at home and on stairs.

What is it?

Crutches let your arms and hands carry your weight instead of the injured leg. Used properly, they help you move around safely and protect the injury. Your doctor or physiotherapist will tell you how much weight you may put on the injured leg: none, some, or as much as is comfortable.

Looking after yourself at home

- Check the height: the top of the crutch should sit 2 to 3 finger-widths below your armpit, with handgrips level with your wrist.
- Take your weight through your hands, not your armpits. Pressing on the armpits can injure the nerves.
- To walk: move both crutches forward, step the injured leg to them, then step through with your good leg.
- Stairs: go up with the good leg first, then the crutches and injured leg. Go down with the crutches and injured leg first.
- Use a handrail on stairs if there is one, and hold both crutches in the other hand.
- Clear loose rugs, wires and wet floors at home, and wear flat, closed shoes.
- Take your time, especially when getting up from a chair or the toilet.

Medicines

- Take pain relief as advised for your injury. Follow the packet or your doctor's instructions.

Follow-up

- Keep your follow-up appointment for the injury, and ask then whether you can put more weight on the leg.
- See your family doctor or a physiotherapist if you are struggling to use the crutches safely.

Come back to the emergency department or call an ambulance straight away if:

- Pain, swelling or redness in your calf
- Sudden shortness of breath or chest pain
- A fall that causes a new injury, or makes the first injury much worse
- Toes that turn cold, pale, blue or numb, especially under a plaster or splint
- Pain in the injured leg that is getting much worse, even with rest and pain relief



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This leaflet is general information to support the advice your doctor or nurse gave you today. It does not replace their advice. If you are worried, seek medical help.

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