Using Your Walking Aid: A Guide to Using Crutches or a Walker
Using Your Walking Aid: A Guide to Using Crutches or a Walker

Using crutches or a walker will help you reduce the amount of weight you place on your leg or allow you to avoid putting weight on your leg.

Using Crutches
To properly fit crutches to your height follow these guidelines:

- Stand tall with the crutch tips 6 inches (16 cm) from the sides of your feet.
- There should be about 2 inches (5 cm) or 3 finger widths between your armpits and the top of your crutches.
- The hand supports should be at the level of the fold in your wrist. When you grasp the handles, your elbows should be slightly bent.
- Always put your weight down through your hands. Do not put the tops of the crutches into your armpits. If you feel any tingling or numbness in your upper body or arms, you are probably using the crutches incorrectly or they may be the wrong size.
- When standing, keep the crutches slightly in front of you. This will help give you better balance.

To go downstairs putting weight on your injured leg
To get down the stairs remember that you always move the crutches first and then your injured leg.

1. Stand at the top of the stairs, and shift your crutches/cane to one hand, so that you can hold the railing.
2. Grasp the railing firmly with one hand and support your weight on the crutches/cane with the other hand.
3. Slide your hand down the railing slightly then move the crutches down one step. Step down with your injured leg, supporting your weight through the crutches/cane and the railing.
4. Step down to the same step with your good leg.
5. Repeat.
How to crutch-walk without putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg, your injured leg is off the ground.
2. Crutches in place at your sides.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the crutches forward.
5. Take a small hop forward with the good leg.
6. Repeat.

How to crutch-walk putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg and some weight on your injured leg.
2. Crutches in place at your sides.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the crutches forward.
5. Take a small step with the injured leg.
6. Put your weight on the crutches and injured leg and step forward with the good leg.
7. Repeat.

Note: Your doctor or physiotherapist will tell you how much weight you can put on your injured leg.

To go upstairs putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand at the top of the stairs, and shift your crutches/cane to one hand so that you can hold the railing.
2. Grasp the railing firmly with one hand and support your weight on the crutches with the other hand.
3. Slide your hand down the rail slightly, then move the crutches down one step. Hop down with your good leg, supporting your weight through the crutches and the railing.
4. Repeat.
Using a walker

To properly fit a walker to your height follow these guidelines:

- Stand tall inside the walker so that the sides are next to your legs.
- The hand supports should be at the level of the fold in your wrist. When you grasp the handles, your elbow should be slightly bent.

Your walker should have 4 legs or 2 wheels and 2 legs. Four wheeled walkers are not safe if you are not able to put weight on both legs.

How to use a walker without putting weight on your injured leg

1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg, your injured leg is off the ground.
2. Put your walker in front of you so that your good leg is in the frame of the walker.
3. Use your hands to support your weight.
4. Move the walker forward.
5. Take a small hop forward with the good leg into the frame of the walker.
6. Repeat.

Using crutches or a cane on stairs

Make sure that the railing is solid. Go slowly to avoid losing your balance.

To go up the stairs without putting weight on your injured leg

1. Stand at the bottom of the stairs, and shift your crutches/cane to one hand so that you can hold the rail.
2. Grasp the railing firmly with one hand and support your weight on the crutches/cane with the other hand.
3. Hop up onto the first step with your good leg, supporting your weight through the crutches and the railing.
4. Adjust your grip on the railing and move the crutches up to the step that you are standing on.
5. Repeat.

To go down the stairs without putting weight on your injured leg

To get down the stairs remember that you always move the crutches first and then your injured leg.
How to use a walker *putting weight* on your injured leg

1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg and some weight on your injured leg.
2. Put your walker in front of you so that your legs are in the frame of the walker.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the walker forward.
5. Put your injured leg on the ground in the center of the walker frame.
6. Put your weight on the walker and injured leg and step forward with the good leg.
7. Repeat.

How to Increase the Amount of Weight on Your Injured Leg

**Partial Weight Bearing**
Your doctor or physiotherapist will tell you if you are only allowed to put a certain amount of weight on your leg (25%, 50%, 75% weight bearing). This means that you cannot put all of your weight on your injured leg.

*For example:*
If you weigh 200 lbs and the doctor told you that you can be 25% weight bearing, then you are allowed to put 50 lbs of weight on your injured leg. You can test this by using a scale.

**Weight Bearing as Tolerated**
If your doctor or physiotherapist tell you that you can weight bear as tolerated you can gradually increase the amount of weight on your injured leg until you are able to put full weight on your leg. You may still require a walking aid, such as a 1 crutch or a cane, until your strength and range of motion return to normal.
How to use a walker *putting weight* on your injured leg

1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg and some weight on your injured leg.
2. Put your walker in front of you so that your legs are in the frame of the walker.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the walker forward.
5. Put your injured leg on the ground in the center of the walker frame.
6. Put your weight on the walker and injured leg and step forward with the good leg.
7. Repeat.

How to Increase the Amount of Weight on Your Injured Leg

**Partial Weight Bearing**

Your doctor or physiotherapist will tell you if you are only allowed to put a certain amount of weight on your leg (25%, 50%, 75% weight bearing). This means that you cannot put all of your weight on your injured leg.

**For example:**

If you weigh 200 lbs and the doctor told you that you can be 25% weight bearing, then you are allowed to put 50 lbs of weight on your injured leg. You can test this by using a scale.

**Weight Bearing as Tolerated**

If your doctor or physiotherapist tell you that you can weight bear as tolerated you can gradually increase the amount of weight on your injured leg until you are able to put full weight on your leg. You may still require a walking aid, such as a 1 crutch or a cane, until your strength and range of motion return to normal.
Using crutches or a cane on stairs
Make sure that the railing is solid. Go slowly to avoid losing your balance.

To go up the stairs without putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand at the bottom of the stairs, and shift your crutches/cane to one hand so that you can hold the rail.
2. Grasp the railing firmly with one hand and support your weight on the crutches/cane with the other hand.
3. Hop up onto the first step with your good leg, supporting your weight through the crutches and the railing.
4. Adjust your grip on the railing and move the crutches up to the step that you are standing on.
5. Repeat.

To go down the stairs without putting weight on your injured leg
To get down the stairs remember that you always move the crutches first and then your injured leg.

Using a walker
To properly fit a walker to your height follow these guidelines:
• Stand tall inside the walker so that the sides are next to your legs.
• The hand supports should be at the level of the fold in your wrist. When you grasp the handles, your elbow should be slightly bent.

Your walker should have 4 legs or 2 wheels and 2 legs. Four wheeled walkers are not safe if you are not able to put weight on both legs.

How to use a walker without putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg, your injured leg is off the ground.
2. Put your walker in front of you so that your good leg is in the frame of the walker.
3. Use your hands to support your weight.
4. Move the walker forward.
5. Take a small hop forward with the good leg into the frame of the walker.
6. Repeat.
How to crutch-walk without putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg, your injured leg is off the ground.
2. Crutches in place at your sides.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the crutches forward.
5. Take a small hop forward with the good leg.
6. Repeat.

How to crutch-walk putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand straight with your weight on your good leg and some weight on your injured leg.
2. Crutches in place at your sides.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the crutches forward.
5. Take a small step with the injured leg.
6. Put your weight on the crutches and injured leg and step forward with the good leg.
7. Repeat.

Note: Your doctor or physiotherapist will tell you how much weight you can put on your injured leg.

To go upstairs putting weight on your injured leg
1. Stand at the bottom of the stairs, and shift your crutches/cane to one hand so that you can hold the railing.
2. Grasp the railing firmly with one hand and support your weight on the crutches with the other hand.
3. Step up onto the first step with your good leg, supporting your weight through the crutches/cane and the railing.
4. Bring your injured leg up to the same step as the good leg.
5. Adjust your grip on the railing and move the crutches/cane up onto the step that you are standing on.
6. Repeat.
To go downstairs *putting weight* on your injured leg
To get down the stairs remember that you always move the crutches first and then your injured leg.

1. Stand at the top of the stairs, and shift your crutches/cane to one hand, so that you can hold the railing.
2. Grasp the railing firmly with one hand and support your weight on the crutches/cane with the other hand.
3. Slide your hand down the railing slightly then move the crutches down one step. Step down with your injured leg, supporting your weight through the crutches/cane and the railing.
4. Step down to the same step with your good leg.
5. Repeat.

---

Using Your Walking Aid: A Guide to Using Crutches or a Walker

Using crutches or a walker will help you reduce the amount of weight you place on your leg or allow you to avoid putting weight on your leg.

**Using Crutches**

To properly fit crutches to your height follow these guidelines:

- Stand tall with the crutch tips 6 inches (16 cm) from the sides of your feet.
- There should be about 2 inches (5 cm) or 3 finger widths between your armpits and the top of your crutches.
- The hand supports should be at the level of the fold in your wrist. When you grasp the handles, your elbows should be slightly bent.
- Always put your weight down through your hands. Do not put the tops of the crutches into your armpits. If you feel any tingling or numbness in your upper body or arms, you are probably using the crutches incorrectly or they may be the wrong size.
- When standing, keep the crutches slightly in front of you. This will help give you better balance.
Getting up and down from a chair using a walker or crutches

Make sure the chair is sturdy and has arms. Avoid sitting in a chair that has wheels or in a chair that is too low.

Sitting down
1. Slowly move backward until you feel the back of your knees touch the front edge of the chair.
2. Move your crutches to the hand that’s next to your injured leg.
3. Support your weight on the crutches.
4. Reach back with your other hand and grasp the chair arm.
5. Move your injured leg out in front.
6. Slowly lower yourself into the chair.

If using a walker
1. Support your weight on the walker using your hand on your injured side.
2. Reach back with the other hand and grasp the chair arms.
3. Move your injured leg out in front and slowly lower yourself into the chair.

Once sitting, elevate your injured leg on a chair or pillow.
Getting up and down from a chair using a walker or crutches

Make sure the chair is sturdy and has arms. Avoid sitting in a chair that has wheels or in a chair that is too low.

**Sitting down**

1. Slowly move backward until you feel the back of your knees touch the front edge of the chair.
2. Move your crutches to the hand that’s next to your injured leg.
3. Support your weight on the crutches.
4. Reach back with your other hand and grasp the chair arm.
5. Move your injured leg out in front.
6. Slowly lower yourself into the chair.

**If using a walker**

1. Support your weight on the walker using your hand on your injured side.
2. Reach back with the other hand and grasp the chair arms.
3. Move your injured leg out in front and slowly lower yourself into the chair.

Once sitting, elevate your injured leg on a chair or pillow.
Using Your Walking Aid:
A Guide to Using Crutches or a Walker

Looking for more health information?
Contact your local public library for books, videos, magazine articles and online health information.
For a list of public libraries in Nova Scotia go to www.publiclibraries.ns.ca

Capital Health promotes a smoke-free and scent-free environment.
Please do not use perfumed products. Thank you!

Capital Health, Nova Scotia
www.cdha.nshealth.ca

Prepared by: Physiotherapy @ Capital Health, Halifax, NS©
Designed and Printed by: Capital Health Audio Visual and Printing Departments

The information in this brochure is provided for information and education purposes only.
The information is not intended to be and does not constitute healthcare or medical advice.
If you have any questions, please ask your healthcare provider.

The information in this pamphlet is to be updated every 3 years.