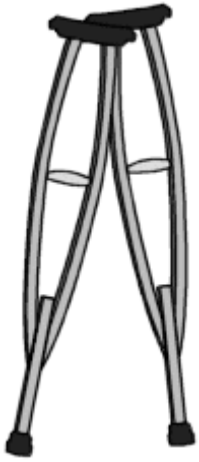


CRUTCHES



PURPOSE: The usual purpose of crutches is to aid the user in walking while relieving weight from one foot or leg. There are other uses for crutches but these require special training by physicians and/or therapists. The user must have adequate upper body and upper arm strength and must always abide by recommended procedures. If your physician or therapist instructs you differently, you must always follow their instructions explicitly.

FITTING: Crutches are very useful in assisting the user in walking, but they also can cause nerve or muscle damage if not used or fitted properly. Crutches must be adjusted to approximately 1 – 1½ inches below the armpit when the user is standing up straight. Fitting must be performed with the rubber tips on. The height of the handgrip should also be adjusted to allow a 20 - 30 degree bend in the elbow when

the user is standing up straight.

USE: The method medical equipment suppliers teach is called the *Three-Point-Gait*. At all times your total weight should be placed on the handgrips, not your armpits. While standing up straight, shift your weight to the good leg and bend your injured leg. Move both crutches forward approximately 12 inches. Now shift your weight to the handgrips and swing through the crutches until you are even with the crutches. Continue performing this routine until you are comfortable with the procedure. Once you are comfortable, you can swing through the crutches to a point in front of the crutches. This point is dependent on your confidence and crutch-walking ability.

Never negotiate steps unless your physician or therapist has recommended you do so. This is a potentially dangerous practice and needs specific training and monitoring. Always practice safe crutch walking. Never attempt to walk at an accelerated pace, this can cause you to slip and fall.

SAFETY: Always use the crutches for their intended purpose. Never allow someone to use your crutches unless they have been fitted properly for that user. Use extra caution for mobility risks and risks of falling, including:

- **Poor lighting:** Use of nightlights, flashlight by bedside, lamps or light switch that can be reached easily.
- **Poor walk spaces:** Fix loose floorboards, paint uneven floors, use wet floors signs, keep snow and ice cleared from entrances, ensure carpet is firmly attached to the stairs, do not walking in stocking feet, and remove loose rugs, clutter, cords, and excess oxygen tubing.
- **Equipment:** Replace worn or cracked walker, crutch, and cane tips, use colored oxygen tubing on light carpet, and tighten loose handrails.
- **Bathroom:** Install grab bars, use bath mats with suction cups, and use elevated toilet seat.
- **Medications:** Be aware of medications that may cause dizziness, drowsiness, and unsteadiness.

MAINTENANCE: Your crutches, if maintained properly, can last for many years. The rubber tips are there to provide traction on walking surfaces. These tips must always be in good working condition. The handgrips are there to provide better gripping of the crutch and to provide cushioning. These should also be changed immediately when they are cracked or become uncomfortable to grasp. The under-arm pads also are there to provide comfort and to help prevent any nerve damage. Replace them when they become split or uncomfortable.