Crutches

Crutches are often needed when you have an injured leg, foot, or hip. They are also used to provide extra balance. When using crutches, it is important to put your weight on your arms and hands rather than on your underarms, so you don’t damage the nerves in your armpits. The top of the crutches should be about 2 to 3 finger breadths below your underarm.

Walking

- Begin by placing both crutches in front of you at the same time. Put them about 1 inch in front and 6 to 8 inches to the side of your toes.
- Lean on your hands, not your underarms.
- Keep your elbows bent as you use your crutches. Keep your injured leg off the floor by bending your knee.
- Move both crutches forward. Then swing your uninjured foot between the crutches (about 10-12”), landing heel first. Repeat with each step.
- If you’re using your crutches for balance, move your right foot and left crutch forward. Then move your left foot and right crutch forward. Continue walking this way.

Going up Stairs

- Face the stairs. Put the crutches close to the first step.
- Push on the crutches with your elbows straight and put your uninjured leg on the first step.
- Bring both crutches up to the first step at the same time. Repeat.
- When using a railing, put both crutches under the arm opposite the railing.

Going Down Stairs

- Stand with the toes of your injured leg close to the edge of the step.
- Bend the knee of your uninjured leg. Slowly lower both crutches onto the next step.
- Lean on your crutches. Slowly lower your uninjured leg on to the same step.
- When using a railing, put both crutches under the arm opposite the railing.

Sitting in a Chair

- Back up to the chair until you feel the edge of it against the back of your legs. Keep your injured leg forward.
- Take your crutches out from under your arms. Sit while bending your uninjured knee.

Getting up From a Chair

- Sit on the edge of your chair. Put your uninjured foot close to the chair.
- Push up with your hands using the crutches or arms of the chair. Put your weight on your uninjured foot as you get up.
- Keep your injured leg bent at the knee and off the floor.

Moving around on crutches is a slow process, so be patient. You will get the hang of it in time.

Check our website: www.uhs.berkeley.edu to learn more about this medical concern or others.

For an appointment www.uhs.berkeley.edu or call 510-642-2000 Clinic Nurse 510-643-7197 for advice