

Emergency Department

Using Elbow Crutches

Instructions for patients



Using elbow crutches will help you to get around during your recovery. It will take a little bit of time to get used to using the crutches, so don't be worried if it feels difficult at the beginning. The medical professional that you see will tell you how much weight you can put through your affected leg and which of the techniques below you should use to move around.

There are a few different ways to use elbow crutches, but remember that the crutches will remain with your affected leg at all times.

1. Non weight-bearing (NWB)

This means that you should not put any weight on your affected leg.

- Keep your affected leg off the ground by holding your knee slightly bent.
- Place both of your crutches one step in front of you, level with each other.
- Move your body forwards between the crutches, supporting your body weight through your hands and good leg, to bring your body level with the crutches once again.



2. Toe-touch weight-bearing (TTWB)

This means that the tips of your toes can rest on the floor, but you still shouldn't put any weight on them.

- Use the same technique as above but, instead of holding your knee bent, let the toes of your affected leg touch the floor.



3. Partial weight-bearing

This means that you can put some weight on your affected leg; you will be advised how much by the medical professional that you see.

- Try to walk as normally as possible with your whole foot touching the floor. The amount of weight you put through your foot will vary (depending on the information from the medical professional).
- Place both of your crutches one step in front of you, level with each other.
- Put your injured leg on the ground, slightly behind the crutches.
- Step through with your unaffected leg while taking some of your weight through your hands and some through your injured leg.



4. Weight-bearing as tolerated (WBAT) or Full weight-bearing (FWB)

- Walk normally, using the crutches as above to take as much pressure away from your foot as you feel you need for comfort.

5. Standing and sitting

- To stand up with the crutches, it is important that you do not put your hands inside the grey cuff part until you are fully standing. This may cause you to injure your elbow or shoulder. Instead, put one hand on both crutch handles (making an 'H' shape with the hand grips) and one hand on the arm of the chair/bed that you are standing from. Push yourself up to stand.
- Once you are standing you can place your hands inside the grey cuff.
- When you come to sit down again, remember to remove your arms from the cuff before sitting. Make sure that the chair or place you want to sit is lined up right behind you. Put both of the crutches together to make the 'H' shape to support you as you sit. Slowly lower yourself onto the seat.



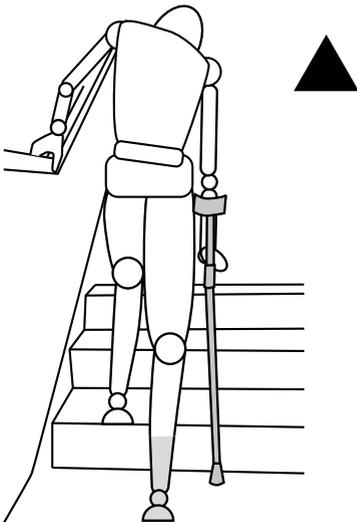
Making the 'H' shape with the hand grips on your crutches

6. Stairs

Remember the saying “good to heaven, bad to hell”.

Going up

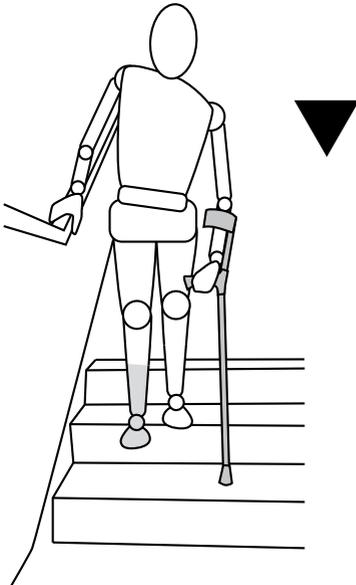
- Stand close to the handrail and hold on with one hand. Hold on to both of the crutches in your other hand. To do this, keep your arm in the grey cuff of the crutch supporting you on the other side to the handrail. Turn the spare crutch so it is horizontal then hold it in the centre at the same time as holding the hand grip of the supporting crutch.
- If there is no handrail available, keep your crutches with one on either side of your body.
- Step up with your good leg first, supporting your affected leg with the handrail and supporting crutch. Lift up your injured leg and then the crutches. Place your supporting crutch safely on the next step so that it can't slip back off the edge.



Going up

Going down

- Stand close to the handrail and hold on with one hand. Hold on to both crutches in your other hand, as when going up.
- If there is no handrail, continue to use both of your crutches, with one on either side of your body.
- Put the supporting crutch down first, supporting your affected leg with the handrail and supporting crutch (or both crutches if there is no handrail), then your injured leg and then your good leg.



Going down

How to contact us if you have further questions

Physiotherapy department

Horton General Hospital

Banbury

Tel: 01295 229 432

Trauma Physiotherapy Outpatients

John Radcliffe Hospital

Oxford

Tel: 01865 221 540

Physiotherapy Department

East Oxford Health Centre

Tel: 01865 264 970

This leaflet is designed to be used alongside advice given by your Physiotherapist. It is not designed to replace their advice.

If you have a specific requirement, need an interpreter, a document in Easy Read, another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221 473** or email **PALSJR@ouh.nhs.uk**

Horton Physiotherapy Team
March 2015
Review: March 2018
Oxford University Hospitals NHS Trust
Oxford OX3 9DU
www.ouh.nhs.uk/information

