

# How to Use Crutches

## Fitting your child for crutches

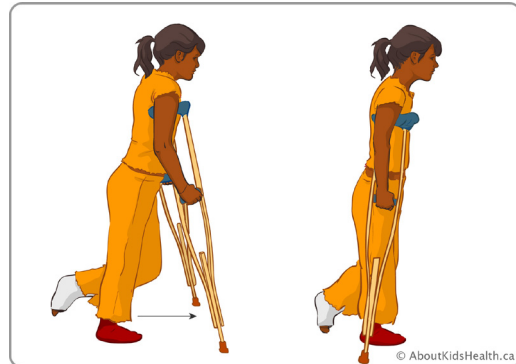
For crutches to be safe, they must fit your child properly. Here are 3 things you can do to tell if the crutches are the correct fit:

1. When your child is standing up straight with shoulders relaxed, you should be able to fit 2 or 3 fingers between the top of the crutch and your child's underarm.
2. When your child is standing with his or her arms hanging loosely at their side, the crutch handles should line up with his or her wrist crease.
3. When your child is holding onto the crutch handles, his or her elbows should be bent (flexed) at a 30 degree angle.

## Supporting the weight of the body

Your child's doctor will tell you how much weight your child can put on his or her "hurt" leg (or leg that is injured or affected).

- Non-weight-bearing: when your hurt leg supports none of your body weight. Instead, all of your weight is supported by the crutches and your good leg. This means that you must keep your injured leg and foot off the floor at all times.
- Touch (feather) weight-bearing: when you can rest your toes of the hurt leg on the floor for balance. Do not carry any body weight on it.
- Partial weight-bearing: when your hurt leg supports up to 1/2 of your body weight.
- Weight-bearing as tolerated: when your hurt leg can support as much weight as feels comfortable or as recommended by a healthcare provider. You will gradually take all of your weight on that leg.



## Walking with crutches

Wear a supportive, low-heeled shoe (that will not slip off) on your good foot.

Here are 5 steps for walking with crutches:

1. Grip the crutch handles. Make sure to stand up straight, keep your elbows bent, clamp your elbows into your side, and relax and drop your shoulders.
2. Place both crutches about 1 step's length in front of you.
3. Always put the hurt leg forward first so it is aligned with the crutch tips.
4. Place both crutches firmly on the floor.
5. Push down on the crutch handles and straighten your elbows. This means that your hands will be supporting your body weight. Make sure to share your weight between your arms. Squeeze the top of the crutches between your upper arm and body.

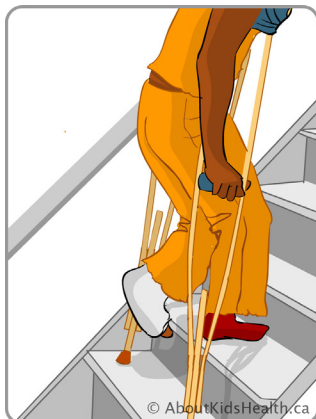


- Non-weight-bearing:** step forward slightly ahead of your crutches with your good leg. DO NOT place the foot of your hurt leg on the floor.
- Touch (feather) weight-bearing:** lightly touch the foot of your hurt leg to the floor as you step forward slightly ahead of your crutches. DO NOT put any weight on your hurt leg.
- Partial weight-bearing:** rest a small amount of weight on the foot of your hurt leg as you step forward slightly ahead of the crutches with your good leg.
- Weight-bearing as tolerated:** rest a small amount of weight on the foot of your hurt leg. Step forward slightly ahead of the crutches with your good leg. Gradually increase the amount of weight on your foot as feels comfortable or as recommended by a healthcare provider.

## Using crutches on stairs

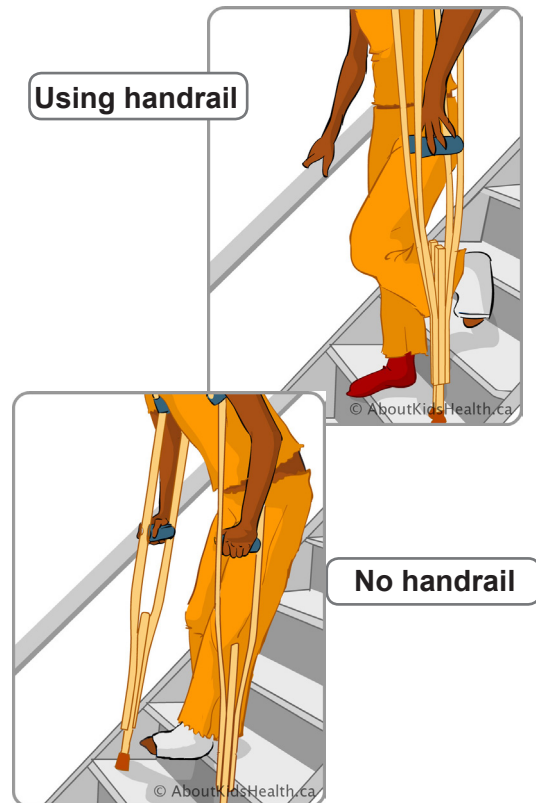
### Going up stairs

1. Facing the stairs, stand between the handrail and your crutch. Bend your hurt leg and move it a little behind you.
2. Place your crutch firmly on the floor close to the first step. Push down on the handrail and crutch handle as you straighten your elbows.
3. Using your hands to support your body weight, put your good foot on the first step.
4. After stepping up onto your good leg, lift your crutches and your hurt leg onto the step. Take care to clear your toes!
5. Repeat until you get to the top of the stairs.



### Going down stairs

1. Facing the stairs, stand between the handrail and your crutch. Stand with the toes of your good foot close to the edge of the step and balance.
2. Holding onto the handrail, place the crutch firmly on the lower step. Move your hurt leg out in front of you. Bend the knee of your good leg.
3. Push down on the handrail and crutch as you straighten your elbows.
4. Using your hands to support your body weight, put your good foot on the lower step.
5. Repeat until you get to the bottom of the stairs.



## Getting up and down from a chair

### Sitting down

1. Standing with the backs of your legs touching the chair, remove crutches from your underarms and hold them in one hand by the crutch handle.
2. Using your free hand to reach back for the arm of the chair, bend your good leg. As you lower yourself slowly into the chair, slide your hurt leg forward across the floor.

### Standing up

1. To get up from the chair, hold both crutches in one hand by the crutch handle and push up on the good leg.
2. Once you feel balanced, place the crutches under your underarms.



### Helpful safety tips

1. Carry all your weight in your hands rather than your armpits. This prevents nerve damage.
2. The rubber tips on the crutches stop slips. Be sure they fit properly and replace them when they wear out.
3. Put the rubber tips of both the crutches a little ahead of your foot to help you balance.
4. Always press down on your hands to straighten your elbows. This makes sure the crutches stay firmly on the ground.
5. Tighten the wing nuts on the crutches every day.
6. Be extra careful on wet or slippery floors and steps. If there is snow or ice on the ground you can buy “ice picks” that fit onto your crutches.
7. Keep your crutches nearby and give yourself lots of time to get about. You will soon get the hang of it!
8. At school, carry books and school supplies in a backpack so your hands are free. Ask to be let out of class a little early to avoid crowds.

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