

# Crutches

*These instructions are guidelines only. Use only as instructed by your healthcare provider.*

## What are Crutches Used For? (Figure 1)

Crutches are used for support while walking.

## How Do I Adjust the Crutches?

- Wearing shoes, stand straight with shoulders relaxed and arms hanging loosely.
- Adjust the length of the crutches so that the crutch top is approximately 2" below the underarm.
- Next, adjust the handles:
  1. Stand with crutches placed 6" in front of and 6" to the side of your feet (Figure 2).
  2. Adjust handle until your elbow is bent approximately 20° to 30° (Figure 3). After adjusting, ensure that the spring buttons are fully engaged and screws are tightened.
  3. Adjust the other crutch length and handle, and ensure that spring buttons are fully engaged in the adjustment holes.

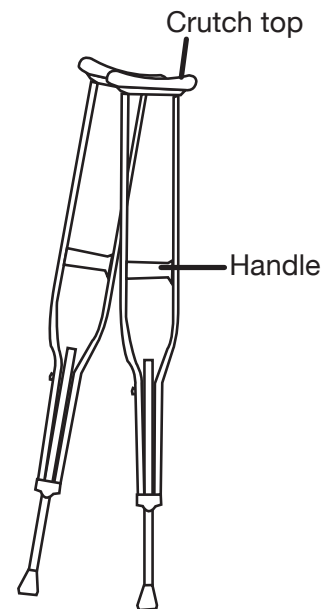


Figure 1: Crutches

## How Do I Use the Crutches?

- WARNING** Follow your healthcare provider's instructions for proper use, and weight bearing on your affected leg.
- WARNING** Make sure that you are correctly fitted, all spring buttons are fully engaged, all screws are tightened, and hand grips are attached securely.
- WARNING** Keep your wrists straight when using crutches.
- WARNING** Carry your full weight on your hands, not your underarm.

### Walking

- Bring the crutches forward together, 6 inches to 12 inches, keeping your injured leg off of the ground.
- Supporting your weight with your hands (not your armpits), carefully swing your good leg forward, placing this foot just in front of the crutches.
- Keep your head and posture upright to maintain balance.

- WARNING** When using crutches, watch for possible safety hazards such as cords, water or oil on floor, floor rugs and other obstacles.

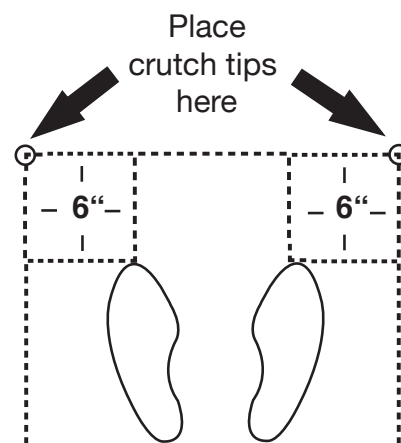


Figure 2: Correct placement of crutches when adjusting handle



### Walking Up Stairs

- Use a handrail if available. Carry the crutch closest to the handrail in the other hand. Hold the handrail with the free hand.
- Step up with the stronger leg first, followed by crutches and the injured leg.

### Walking Down Stairs

- Place crutches down on stair first, followed by injured leg, then the stronger leg.

### Sitting Down

- Back up to the chair (or whatever you are sitting on) until you feel the back of your legs touch the chair.
- Hold both crutches by the handgrips in the hand on the injured side.
- Hold onto the chair with the other hand and lower yourself slowly, bending at the hips.
- Unless authorized by your health professional, keep your injured leg off the ground, and your weight on the good leg.

### Standing Up

- Make sure that the chair is secure. If using a wheelchair, ensure that the brakes are on.
- Move forward until seated at the edge of the chair. Place the stronger foot on the floor.
- Hold the crutches by the handgrips in the hand on the injured side.
- Push up from the chair with the stronger leg, keeping the head well forward.
- When upright, place a crutch under each arm.

### How Do I Care for the Crutches?

- Clean the hand grips with a mild soap, detergent or household cleaner. Do not use solvents such as acetone, lacquer thinner, or turpentine.
- Periodically check the rubber tips for rips, tears, cracks or worn tread. If any of these conditions are found, contact the Red Cross immediately.

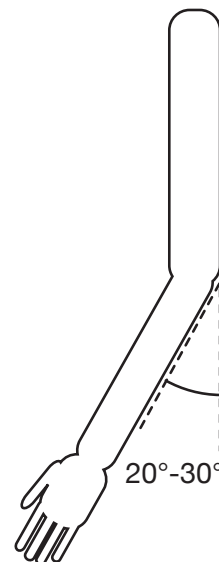


Figure 3: Correct angle of elbow on crutch handle

*Please ensure that equipment returned to the Red Cross is clean and in good condition.*

