

Fraser Health  
AUTHORITY

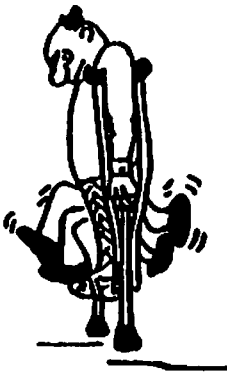
South Fraser  
Health Region

Healthy Individuals  
Healthy Communities

PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT

# Crutches

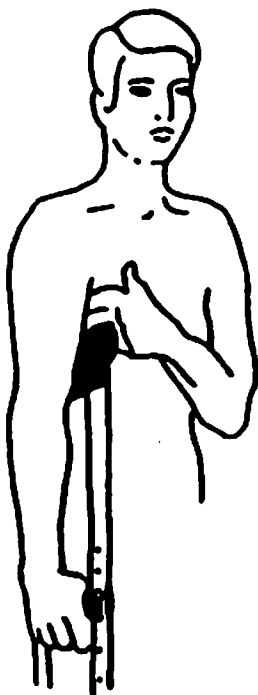
*How to  
Use Them  
Easily &  
Safely*



This handout has been adapted with permission from material provided by the Physiotherapy Dept., Burnaby Hospital at 3935 Kincaid, Burnaby, B.C.

Reading this leaflet will enable you to use your crutches easily and safely.

## Fitting Your Crutches



The *height of the crutches* should enable you to put 2-3 fingers between the top of the crutch and your armpit. If the crutches are **TOO HIGH** or if you **LEAN** on the crutch pads, the nerves and blood vessels under your armpits may get damaged. The *height of the hand grips* should be such that your elbow is just slightly bent.

## Wingnuts and Crutch Tips

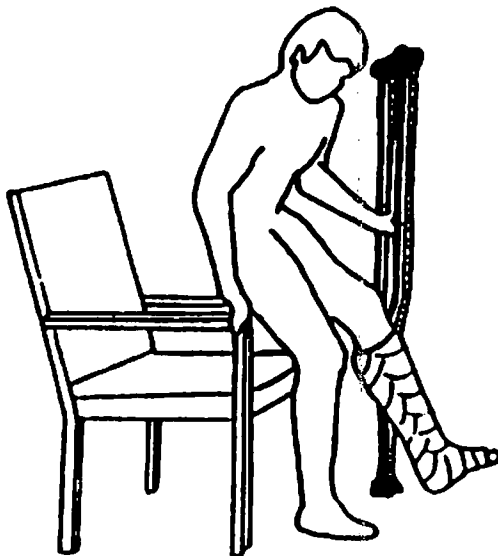
If your crutches have wingnuts, **TIGHTEN** them frequently. **CHECK** the crutch tips periodically for excessive wear and **REPLACE** when worn.

## Weight Bearing

There are 3 methods of weight bearing with crutches. Your doctor, physiotherapist or nurse will tell you the method you are to use:

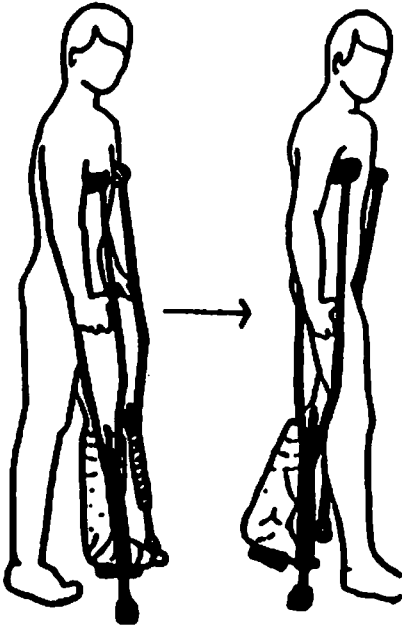
- 1. Non Weight Bearing – N.W.B.**  
The injured leg does **NOT** touch the ground when you are standing or using crutches.
- 2. Partial Weight Bearing – P.W.B.**  
This can range from “just touching” to “almost fully bearing all weight” on the leg. You will be instructed on how much.
- 3. Full Weight Bearing – F.W.B.**  
You can take as much weight as you can tolerate on the leg.

SITTING --- STANDING ---- SITTING



Always make sure that the chair is stable and firmly locked.

## 2. Partial and Full Weight Bearing



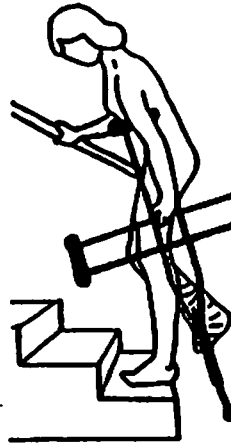
- Lift the crutches forward 1 step length.
- Move the injured leg forward level with the crutches. (Eventually you will be able to move crutches and leg forward together).
- Take some weight on your leg and lift the good leg forward 1 step ahead of the crutches.
- Always take equal step length with both legs.

### HINTS

- Wear stable, supporting shoes.
- Be careful of slipping on wet floors.
- In rain, ice or snow take shorter steps and keep crutches as upright as possible so crutch tips do not slip.

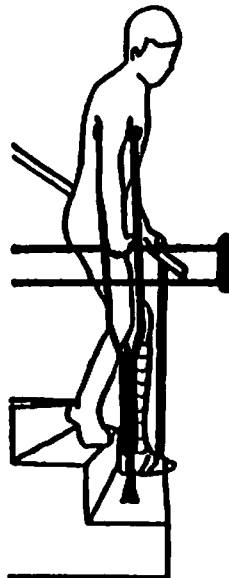
## Stairs

### *Up With the Good Leg*



- Remove crutch from the arm by the hand rail and carry it in the other hand horizontally.
- Use the hand rail with one hand and the crutch with the other.
- Push down on the crutch and lift the good leg up onto the step.
- Lift the crutches and injured leg onto the same step.

### *Down With the Bad Leg and Crutches*



- Place crutches in one hand as for going up.
- Hold the hand rail a little below you with the free hand.
- Lower the crutch and the injured leg down to the next step.
- Take your weight on the crutch and rail and slowly lower the good leg down to the same step.

## To Stand Up

- Move forward to the edge of the chair.
- Place good foot flat on the floor and hold injured leg off the floor.
- Place crutches in one hand, holding across both hand-grips.
- Lean forward and push up from the chair using your arms and good leg.
- When you have got your balance, place your crutches under your arm.

## To Sit Down

- When you get close to the chair, turn and back up until your legs touch the edge of the seat.
- Place crutches in one hand holding across both hand-grips.
- Place the other hand on the arm of the chair and slowly lower yourself down to sitting.

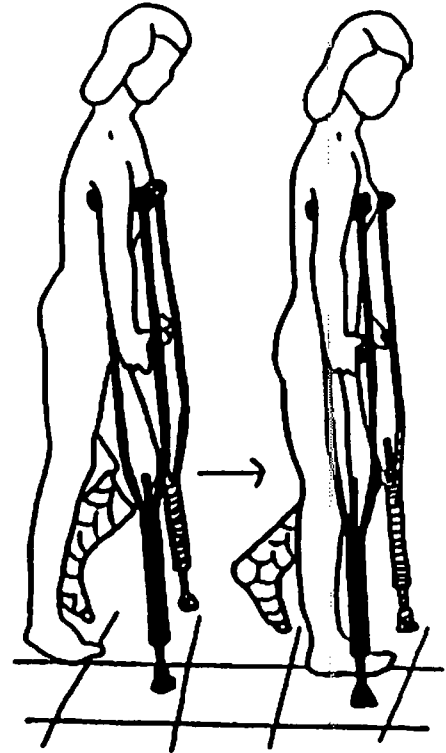
## Standing Balance

The most stable position for standing is to form a tripod with your foot and crutches. Place your crutch tips apart and ahead of your feet.

Keep your crutches secure under your arms by squeezing the tops of the crutches into your ribs with your upper arm muscles.

## Walking

### 1. Non Weight Bearing



- Hold your injured leg off the ground.
- Lift both crutches forward 1 step length, have crutches wide enough apart for your hips to pass through.
- Take your weight on your hands and lift your good leg forward level with the crutches.
- Always be careful of falling backwards.