

Live Well to
Learn Well

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health.cornell.edu

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Appointments:
Monday–Saturday

*Check web for hours,
services, providers,
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information*

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Using Crutches

If you have injured your leg or foot, you may require the use of crutches to keep partial or full weight off your injury and to allow healing. Your body's weight will be supported on the crutches instead of on the affected lower limb. If this is your first time using crutches, you may find the following tips especially useful.

To use crutches, you should

- Have crutches individually fitted by a medical professional.
- Learn to use them properly and safely.
- Ask for assistance when first using crutches.

Preparation

- Ensure that all pads are securely in place.
- Check to see that all hardware is tight. Re-check the screws at least once per week.
- Clean out the tips to make sure they are free of dirt and stones.
- Request that a friend stay nearby to help you until you get used to using your crutches.
- Remove small, loose rugs from your path.
- If your tips wear out, contact Cornell Health for a replacement set.

Degree of weight-bearing

It is important to follow your clinician's instructions and put only the amount of weight that they advise you to use on your affected side. Options include:

- Non-weight bearing activity: Support weight on crutches and unaffected leg. Do not put weight on injured leg.
- Partial weight bearing activity: As you move forward on the crutches, support some of your weight on the injured leg.
- Weight bearing to tolerance.
- Full weight bearing.

Follow your clinician's instructions until you have been re-evaluated.

Getting up from a chair or bed

- Hold both crutches by the grips in the hand on the side of the injured leg.
- Slide to the edge and push up from the chair or bed with the other hand while pushing on the crutches.
- Use your good leg to move to a standing position.

- Get your balance and put your crutches into position before starting to walk.

Walking with crutches

- Put the crutches under your arms and press them into your ribs.
- Bring the crutches forward 6 to 12 inches, keeping your injured leg off the ground.
- Supporting your weight with your hands (not your armpits), swing your good leg forward, placing your foot just in front of the crutches.
- Keep your head and posture upright to maintain balance and the correct center of gravity. Don't slouch.

Going through doorways

- Be sure to give yourself enough room to allow your feet and crutches to clear the door.
- After opening the door, block it from swinging closed with a crutch tip.
- Walk through the doorway.

Sitting down

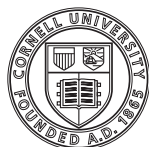
- Back up to the chair until you feel the chair on your legs.
- Hold both crutches by the grips in the hand on the injured side.
- Hold onto the chair or bed with the other hand and lower yourself slowly, bending at the hips.
- Unless you are allowed to put some weight on your injured leg, keep your injured leg off the ground and your weight on the good leg.

Going upstairs

- When using stairs remember: "Up with the good, down with the bad."
- If there is a handrail, put both crutches under the opposite arm and use the rail for support.
- Start close to the bottom step, and push down through with your hands.
- Step up with the uninjured leg before bringing the crutches and injured leg up.
- Check your balance before you proceed to the next step.



(over)



Going downstairs

- Start at the edge of the step, keeping your hips beneath you.
- Place your crutches on the step below and extend your injured leg down. (Remember: “down with the bad”.)
- Be sure to bend at the hips and knees to prevent leaning too far forward.
- Step down with your strong leg last.
- Check your balance before you continue.
- A handrail will make things easier for you. Simply hold both crutches on one side.



Using one crutch or a cane

- Use the crutch or cane to keep some of the weight off the injured leg.
- Place it on the opposite side of the body from the injured leg. When you take a step with the injured leg, the crutch or cane will provide extra support should the injured leg not support you adequately.