

Using Elbow Crutches

NHS Instructions for Patients (adapted from <https://www.ouh.nhs.uk/patient-guide/leaflets/files/11679Pcrutches.pdf>)

Using Elbow Crutches will help you get around when you have difficulty walking. It will take a bit of time to get used to them, so don't be worried if it feels difficult at the beginning. A medical professional will advise you on how much weight you can put on your affected leg and which of the techniques you should use to move around. When your arm is relaxed at your side, the handle of the crutch should be just above the wrist crease, level with the prominent ulna bone.

To Stand from Sitting

- It is important that you do not put your hands inside the crutches grey cuffs until you are fully standing as this can cause injury to the elbow or shoulder
- Hold the handles of both crutches, facing each other in one hand. Making an **H** shape with the hand grips
- Put your other hand on the chair you're sitting on. Push up from the chair seat onto your good leg
- Once standing, transfer one crutch into the other hand and put your arms inside the grey cuffs. Put the crutches slightly in front of you and get your balance

To Sit from Standing

- Have the chair immediately behind you
- Take your arms out of the grey cuffs. Put both crutches in one hand
- Hold the handles of both crutches, facing each other in one hand. Making an **H** shape with the hand grips
- Hold chair with the other hand and slowly lower yourself onto the chair and sit down gently

To Walk

- Partial weight bearing (putting some weight on your injured leg)
- Place both crutches one step in front of you and level with each other
- Then place your injured leg forward on the ground, slightly behind the crutches
- Take some of the weight on to your hands
- Step through with your good leg then put both crutches forward again and repeat

Non-weight bearing (you should put no weight on your injured 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 and level with each other – keeping your injured leg off the ground
- Move your body and good leg forwards between the crutches, supporting your body weight through your hands and good leg and keeping all weight off your injured leg

- Bring your body level with the crutches and repeat

Weight-bearing as tolerated

- This means, put as much weight on to your bad leg, as feels comfortable to do so

Using crutches on the stairs

Going Up Stairs

- Stand close to the handrail and hold it with one hand
- Hold onto both crutches in the other hand. To do this - Keep your other arm in the grey cuff of the supporting crutch on the other side of the handrail. Then 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
- Step up with your good leg first whilst supporting you 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 of the stair
- If there is no hand rail available, keep one crutch on either side of you body.

Going Down Stairs

- Stand close to the handrail and hold on with one hand
- Hold on to both crutches with the other (as described above)
- Put the supporting crutch down first on to the step
- Supporting your bad leg with the hand rail & supporting crutch
- Then move your injured leg down and then finally your good leg
- If there is no handrail, continue to use both of your crutches, with one on either side of your body

General Safety

- Regularly check your elbow crutches for bends or loose handles
- Be aware of hazards including wet floors, uneven surfaces, wet leaves, ice etc
- Check the rubber ferrule on the bottom of the crutches has not worn smooth or split
- Remove any loose mats or rugs in your home to prevent tripping
- Make sure lighting is adequate in your home
- Wear flat supportive shoes that are comfortable and fit well
- Avoid alcohol and recreational drugs whilst using crutches
- Get advice if you'd like to discuss driving concerns – insurances vary
- Avoid carrying anything in your hands – consider using a small back pack

Trauma Physiotherapy Outpatients

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Further Information

<https://www.fracturecare.co.uk/general-advice/using-your-crutches/>

<https://www.nhslanarkshire.scot.nhs.uk/services/physiotherapy-msk/walking-aids-elbow-crutches/>

<https://www.hey.nhs.uk/patient-leaflet/soft-tissue-injury-use-of-elbow-crutches/>

[https://www.spc.ox.ac.uk/asset/SPC Ankle Sprain Advice June 2020.pdf](https://www.spc.ox.ac.uk/asset/SPC%20Ankle%20Sprain%20Advice%20June%202020.pdf)