

Use of crutches

Emergency Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This leaflet is for people who have been given crutches in our Emergency Department. It gives information on how to use them and how to care for them.

How do I use the crutches?

Always use the crutches as advised by the healthcare practitioner. When we give you the crutches, we will measure them so they are the right size for you. Once your crutches have been set up, you should not need to adjust them.

You will know they are the correct height if when you stand up tall with your shoes on, your elbow is a little bent and your shoulders are relaxed when your hands are on the crutches.

Walking

If you need to keep your leg off the ground:

- Holding the knee of your affected leg slightly bent to keep it off the ground, place both of your crutches one step in front of you, level with each other.
- Supporting your body weight through your hand and good leg, move forwards between your crutches to bring your body level with the crutches again.

If you can take some weight on your injured leg:

- Place both of your crutches one step in front of you, level with each other.
- Put your injured leg on the ground, slightly behind the crutches.
- Step through with your unaffected leg while taking some of your weight through your hands and some through your injured leg.

Standing

When you stand up with crutches, be careful not to put your hands inside the grey cuff part until you are actually standing. This is because it may cause damage to your elbow or shoulder. To stand up:

- Put one hand on both crutch handles, making an H shape with the hand grips. The nurse caring for you will show you how to do this.
- Put the other hand on the arm of the chair or bed that you are standing up from.
- Push yourself up until you are standing.
- When you are standing, you can put your hands inside the grey cuffs.

Sitting

When you sit down, remember to move your arms from the grey cuffs first. Make sure the chair or place you want to sit is right behind you. To sit down:

- Put both crutches together to make an H shape to support you as you sit.
- Slowly lower yourself onto the seat.

Managing stairs

Going up

- Stand close to the handrail and hold on with one hand.
- Hold both crutches with your other hand. To do this, keep your arm in the grey cuff of the crutch you are using to support you on the other side to the handrail, so that your hand is free. Turn the spare crutch so it is horizontal and hold it in the centre with your free hand.
- If there is no handrail, have your crutches with one either side of your body.
- Step up with your uninjured leg first, using the handrail and supporting crutch to support your injured leg. Lift up your injured leg, then lift up the crutches.
- Put your supporting crutch on the next step so it cannot slip back off the edge of the step.

Going down

- Stand close to the handrail and hold on with one hand.
- Hold both crutches with your other hand, as per the instructions in the 'Going up' section.
- If there is no handrail, have your crutches with one either side of your body.
- Put the supporting crutch down first, using the handrail and supporting crutch to support your injured leg. Move your injured leg down to the step below, then your uninjured leg.

Precautions when using crutches

- When you are going through doorways, 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.

- Be careful not to slip on water, ice, fallen leaves or uneven surfaces.
- If your hands get tired or sore, wear padded cycle or skateboard gloves.
- When you are out and about, use a backpack rather than carrying a bag.

How do I care for my crutches?

Check that the rubber part on the bottom of the crutch has a pattern on them. If these wear down with use, they should be replaced.

To clean the crutches, use washing up liquid and warm water.

If the crutches are damaged in any way, please bring them to our Emergency Department at Russells Hall Hospital.

Please return your crutches to the Emergency Department when you no longer need them. This will ensure we are able to keep a constant stock in the department for everyone who needs them.

Can I find out more?

If you have any questions, or if there is anything you do not understand about this leaflet, please speak to one of our nurses. If you need help when you return home, please contact your GP or NHS 111.

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/accident-emergency/>

If you have any feedback on this patient information leaflet, please email dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative language or format, for example in large print or easy read, please call us on 0800 073 0510 or email dgft.pals@nhs.uk or write to Patient Advice and Liaison Service.