

Crutch Walking Guidelines

Following your surgery, you will be placed on crutches with a 20 pounds flat foot weight bearing limit on the involved leg to assist with your gait (walking) and the healing process. You will be on crutches for a minimum of 2 weeks or up to a maximum of 6 weeks depending on the procedures performed during your surgery.

Correct Positioning of your crutches:

You will be fitted and receive your crutches from physical therapy or the Hospital. Have your physical therapist recheck correct crutch positioning at your first visit.

1. Standing straight up place crutches under each arm with the tips about 3 inches diagonally from your fifth (little) toe.
2. The arm piece should be resting underneath your armpit measuring 1 ½ inches (or 3 finger widths) under your armpit. The arm piece should be resting comfortably in your side. The axillary nerve is superficial and permanent nerve damage can occur. Therefore, your weight should be mostly through your hands not your armpits to prevent nerve damage while using or resting on crutches.
3. Your elbows should be bent at an approximate 15-20° angle.

Walking using the 3-point gait with 20-pound weight bearing restriction:

1. Begin with placing your surgical leg and the crutch tips at the same time about 6 inches ahead of you. The crutch tips should remain about 3 inches from the outside of your foot even with your ankle. It is easiest to think of your crutch tips and your surgical leg as one unit moving together, like having a string running from the tip of one ankle to the other tip.
2. As you begin to shift your weight forward, your hands will absorb the majority of your body weight while placing 20 pounds on surgical leg as you bring your good leg through about 6 inches ahead of the surgical leg.
3. You will then transition by bringing your crutches and surgical leg resuming a traditional gait (walking) pattern.
4. **Go slow!** Your gait will be slower with shorter strides than you are used to. Crutches are tiring causing you to fatigue quickly. Be cautious when walking on wet surfaces.

Going up and down stairs:

Remember the following saying:

“Up with the good” and “Down with the bad” (bad = surgical leg)

1. Going upstairs you will always begin with the good leg first. Then bring your crutches and surgical leg to the same step.
2. Going downstairs you will always begin with your involved leg and crutches first then bring your good leg to the same step.
3. Reminder that 20-pound flat foot weight bearing still applies with stairs.

HOME MODIFICATIONS

Suggestions for preparing your home prior to surgery:

FLOORS

- ✓ Pick up throw rugs and make sure there is no clutter on the floor.

LIGHTING

- ✓ Make sure you have appropriate lighting especially at night.
 - Sylvania Dot-It LED light (Home Depot) are battery operated and stick on the wall.
 - Clapper for room lights
 - Night light in bathroom

BATHROOM

- ✓ Remove rugs
- ✓ Have appropriate lighting and night light
- ✓ Place bath and shower safety tread in base of tub (Home Depot)
- ✓ Purchase medical equipment prior to surgery if recommended by MD or PT (see below)
- ✓ Consider installing a handheld shower head for increased ease of showering.
- ✓ Use a chair with a back for getting ready in the AM (drying hair, shaving, etc.)

WALKING DEVICE

- ✓ Keep walking device next to your bed, in order to be reminded that you will need it to walk complying with MD weight-bearing restrictions.

SHOES

- ✓ Use a slide in shoe with a back support

CLOTHES

- ✓ Wardrobe: loose, casual pants (athletic pants, sweatpants) to be worn after surgery.

KITCHEN

- ✓ Cupboards: organize an accessible shelf in your kitchen.
- ✓ Stock up on frozen/ easy preparation foods

POST OP EQUIPMENT NEEDS:

- ✓ Reacher (Online Walgreens)
- ✓ Leg Lifter (Hospital)
- ✓ Raised toilet seat (Online Walgreens/hospital)
- ✓ Handheld shower head (Home Depot)
- ✓ Shower Stool (Home Depot)
- ✓ Shower tread (Home Depot)

Please note, these stores are just suggestions; you can check with your local medical supply store.