

# Using Your Walking Aid

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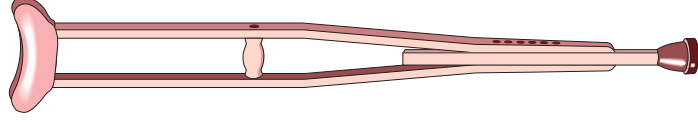
## Using Your Walking Aid

- Using a walking aid (like a cane, crutches, or a walker) can help you:
  - › lower the amount of weight you put on your leg.
- or
- › help you avoid putting weight on your leg.
- Your primary health care provider (family doctor or nurse practitioner) or your physiotherapist will tell you how much weight you can put on your affected leg.

## Using crutches

### To properly fit crutches to your height:

- Stand straight. Place the bottoms of the crutches on the floor 6 inches (16 cm) from the sides of your feet.
- There should be about 2 inches (5 cm) or 3 finger widths between your armpits and the tops of your crutches.
- The hand supports should be at the level of your wrist, where a watch would be. When you grasp the handles, your elbows should be slightly bent.

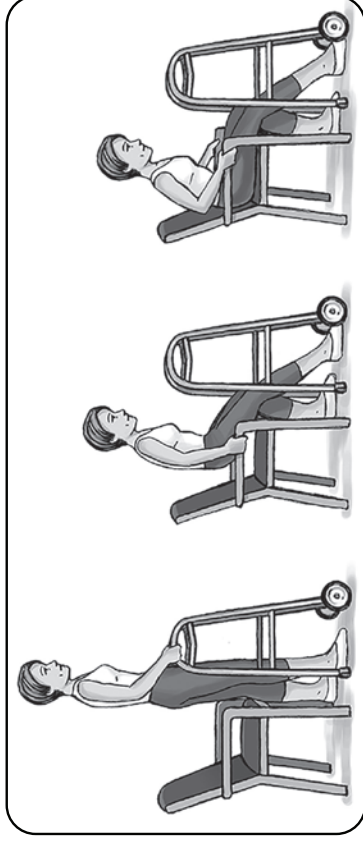


### To stand up using a walker:

1. Slide your bum forward to the edge of the chair.
2. Bend your non-affected leg under you to support your weight.
3. Slide your affected leg forward.
4. Push down with your hands on the chair arms, and raise your body to stand up. Put most of your weight on your non-affected leg.
5. Once you feel stable, use your walker.

### To sit down using a walker:

1. Support your weight on your walker using the hand on your affected side.
2. Reach back with your other hand and grasp the chair arm.
3. Slide your affected leg forward and slowly lower yourself into the chair.
4. Once you are sitting, raise your affected leg on a chair or a pillow.



- Always put your weight down through your hands. **Do not put the tops of the crutches into your armpits.** If you feel any tingling or numbness in your upper body or arms:
  - > you may not be using your crutches the right way.
- or
  - > they may be the wrong size.
- When standing, keep your crutches slightly in front of you. This will help you have better balance.

### To use crutches while putting weight on your affected leg:

1. Stand straight. Put most of your weight on your non-affected leg and some weight on your affected leg.
2. Hold your crutches in place at your sides.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the crutches forward.
5. Take a small step with your affected leg.
6. Put your weight on the crutches and on your affected leg, then step forward with your non-affected leg.
7. Repeat.

### **To use crutches without putting weight on your affected leg:**

1. Stand straight. Put your weight on your non-affected leg and keep your affected leg off the ground.
2. Hold your crutches in place at your sides.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the crutches forward.
5. Take a small hop with your non-affected leg.
6. Repeat.

### **Getting up and down from a chair using crutches or a walker**

- Make sure the chair is sturdy and has arms.
- **Do not** sit in a chair that:
  - › has wheels.
  - › is too low.

### **To sit down using crutches:**

1. Slowly move back until you feel the backs of your knees touch the front edge of the chair.
2. Move your crutches to the hand on your affected side.
3. Support your weight on your crutches.
4. Reach back with your other hand and grasp the chair arm.
5. Slide your affected leg forward and slowly lower yourself into the chair.
6. Once you are sitting, raise your affected leg on a chair or a pillow.

To go down stairs without putting weight on your affected leg:

**Remember:**

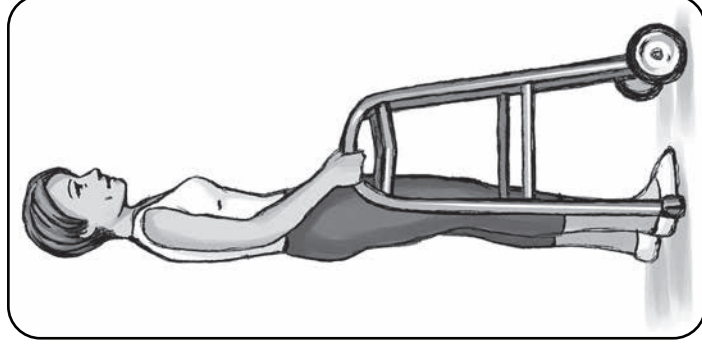
When going down stairs, always move your crutches or cane first, then move your affected leg.

1. Stand at the top of the stairs. Move your crutches or cane to 1 hand, so that you can hold the handrail with your other hand.
2. Grasp the handrail firmly with 1 hand. Support your weight on your crutches or cane with your other hand.
3. Slide your hand down the rail slightly, then move your crutches or cane down 1 step. Hop down to that step with your non-affected leg, supporting your weight through your crutches or cane and the handrail.
4. Repeat.

## Using a walker

To properly fit a walker to your height:

- Stand straight inside the walker so that the sides are next to your legs.
- The hand supports should be at the level of your wrist, where a watch would be. When you grasp the handles, your elbows should be slightly bent.



**Note:** Your walker should have:

- > 4 legs
- or**
- > 2 wheels and 2 legs

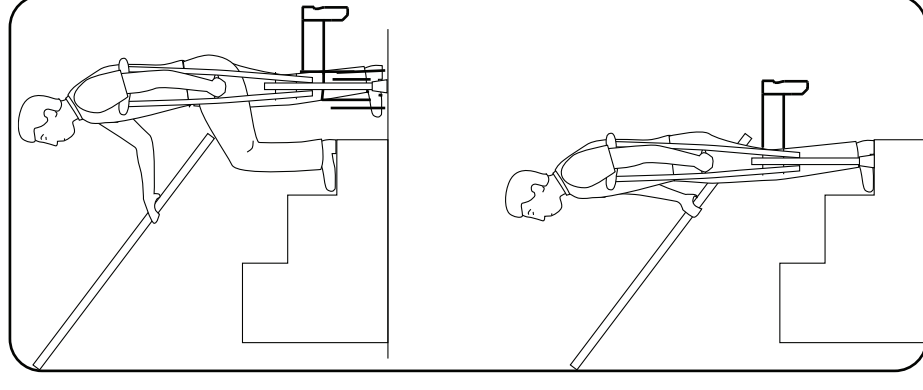
**4-wheeled walkers are not safe if you cannot put weight on both legs.**

### To use a walker while putting weight on your affected leg:

1. Stand straight. Put most of your weight on your non-affected leg and some weight on your affected leg.
2. Put your walker in front of you so that your legs are inside the frame.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the walker forward.
5. Move your affected leg to the middle of the walker frame.
6. Put your weight on the walker and on your affected leg. Then take a small step with your non-affected leg.
7. Repeat.

### To go up stairs without putting weight on your affected leg:

1. Stand at the bottom of the stairs. Move your crutches or cane to 1 hand, so that you can hold the handrail.
2. Grasp the handrail firmly with 1 hand. Support your weight on your crutches or cane with your other hand.
3. Hop up onto the first step with your non-affected leg, supporting your weight through your crutches or cane and the handrail.
4. Adjust your grip on the handrail and move your crutches or cane up to the step that you are standing on.
5. Repeat.

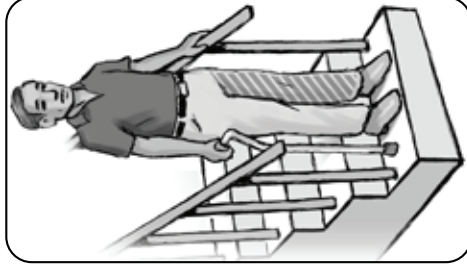
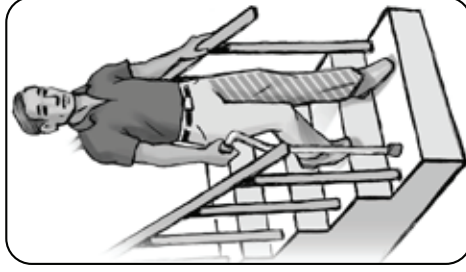


**To go down stairs while putting weight on your affected leg:**

**Remember:**

**When going down stairs, always move your crutches or cane first, then move your affected leg.**

1. Stand at the top of the stairs. Move your crutches or cane to 1 hand, so you can hold the handrail with your other hand.
2. Grasp the rail firmly with 1 hand. Support your weight on your crutches or cane with your other hand.
3. Slide your hand down the rail slightly, then move your crutches or cane down 1 step. Step down with your affected leg, supporting your weight through your crutches or cane and the handrail.
4. Step down to the same step with your non-affected leg.
5. Repeat.



**To use a walker without putting weight on your affected leg:**

1. Stand straight. Put your weight on your non-affected leg and keep your affected leg off the ground.
2. Put your walker in front of you so that your non-affected leg is inside the frame.
3. Support your weight with your hands.
4. Move the walker forward.
5. Take a small hop with your non-affected leg into the walker frame.
6. Repeat.



## Putting weight on your affected leg

### Partial weight bearing

- Your primary health care provider or your physiotherapist will tell you how much weight you can put on your affected leg.
- They will tell you a percentage of weight that you can put on your leg (like 25%, 50%, or 75% weight bearing). This is a percentage of your total body weight. For example:
  - › If you weigh 200 pounds and your health care provider told you that your leg can be 25% weight bearing, then you can put 50 pounds of weight on your affected leg.
- You can use a scale to help you put the right amount of weight on your leg.
- **Never put all your weight on your affected leg if you have been told to do partial weight bearing.**

### Weight bearing as tolerated

- If your health care provider told you it is OK to weight bear as tolerated, you can slowly put more weight on your affected leg over time until you are able to put your full weight on it.
- You may still need a walking aid until your strength and range of motion return.

## Using crutches or a cane on stairs

Make sure that the handrail is solid. Go slowly to avoid losing your balance.

### To go up stairs while putting weight on your affected leg:

1. Stand at the bottom of the stairs. Move your crutches or cane to 1 hand, so you can hold the handrail with your other hand.
2. Grasp the rail firmly with 1 hand. Support your weight on your crutches or cane with your other hand.
3. Step up onto the first step with your non-affected leg, supporting your weight through your crutches or cane and the handrail.
4. Bring your affected leg up to the same step as your non-affected leg.
5. Adjust your grip on the handrail and move your crutches or cane up to the step that you are standing on.
6. Repeat.

