

ASSISTIVE DEVICES – CRUTCHES AND CANES

Most injuries to ankles, feet, and knees are strains and sprains. The recommended immediate treatment is “RICE” — Rest, Ice, Compression and Elevation. An assistive device (AD), such as a crutch or a cane, is often needed to take weight off the injured part. The following information is provided to you in hopes that it will help you to utilize your AD in the safest and most efficient manner.

Crutch Walking



Basics for all situations:

- If the injury is to your knee, allow the injured leg to be relaxed and carry it alongside the uninjured leg.
- If the injury is to your ankle or foot, bend the knee of the injured leg.

Measuring Crutches

- Stand with good posture—back straight and head up.
- There should be a space of about 2 or 3 fingers between the top of the crutch and your armpit.
- With your elbows straight, the crease in your wrist should be at the handgrip. Now place your hands on grips. Your elbow should be slightly bent (25 to 30 degrees).

Walking with Crutches

Pre-Walk Stance:

- Your shoulders should be in a relaxed position with a space between your armpits and the top of the crutch.
- Have your weight supported by your hands, which should be grasping crutch handgrips.
- Position the bottom tips about 2 inches to the side and 4 to 6 inches to the front of the toes.

Walking

“Step to Gait”

- Move both crutches 3 to 5 inches forward.
- Shift your body weight onto handgrips and take step forward with unaffected leg.

“Swing-Through Gait”

- Move both crutches 9 to 12 inches forward.
- Shift your body weight onto handgrips.
- Lift your stronger foot and swing through the crutches to a point about 9 to 12 inches in front of the crutch tips.

Stairs with Handrails

Place both crutches under the arm farthest from the handrail.

To Ascend Stairs: “UP WITH THE GOOD”

- Facing the stairs, place the crutches close to the first step and place your free hand on the handrail slightly in front of your body.
- Push down on the crutches and the handrail, so your elbow is straight; now lift your “good leg” up.
- Lift the crutches up to the same step as your stronger foot.

To Descend Stairs: “DOWN WITH THE BAD”

- Place the toes of your stronger foot close to the edge of step. Place your free hand on the rail in front of your body.
- Place the tips of the crutches in the middle of the step below you.
- Shift your weight onto handgrips of the crutches and the hand railing.
- Very carefully, lower your stronger foot to same step as the crutches.

Stairs without Handrails

To Ascend Stairs:

- Place the crutches under each arm and put the crutches close to the first step and assume a “Pre-walk” position.
- Push down on the crutch handgrips, so your weight is on your hands.
- Lead with your “good leg”
- Shift your weight onto your stronger foot and lift the crutches up to the same step as your stronger foot.



To Descend Stairs:

- Place the toes of your stronger foot close to the edge of the step and assume a “Pre-walk stance.”
- Place the tips of the crutches in the middle of the step below you.
- Shift your weight onto the handgrips of the crutches and place your “bad leg” down.
- Next, lower your stronger foot to the same step as the crutches.

When ascending and descending stairs without a handrail, you may want to ask a friend to walk one or two steps below for safety until you are confident and have good balance.

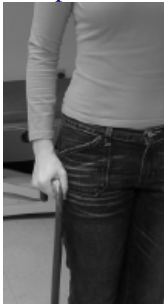
Cane Walking

Measuring Canes

When standing with your arm straight at your side, the wrist crease on the thumb side should be at hand grip level.

Walking with a Cane

Place the cane on the “good” side. When you take a step with your “bad” leg, transfer your weight to the cane to take pressure off your “bad” leg.



To Descend Stairs

- Lead with your “good leg” when going up steps; when descending steps, lead with “bad” leg.
- Place the cane in the hand opposite the injured leg.
- When descending stairs, place the cane onto the step and then place your injured leg down.

Remember

- When ascending and descending stairs: “Up with the good and down with the bad.”
- When using a cane, place it on the opposite side of your injury!

Helpful Hints

The following are suggestions to make your walking safer and easier while using an assistive device:

- Walk only on intact paved surfaces. Do not walk on grass that can be slippery, uneven, and filled with holes. Nighttime walking requires extreme caution and attention to environmental conditions.
- Wear a flat, supportive (preferably a “tie”) shoe on your good foot. No flip-flops, slippers, or high heels.
- Use a backpack (a strap over each shoulder) to carry books and/or personal belongings.
- When wearing a sweater, jacket, or coat have it buttoned or zipped closed, so that there is no interference.
- When crutches are not in use, turn them upside down on the underarm rest so they will be less likely to fall over.

[Penn State Wheelchair Accessible Map](http://www.opp.psu.edu/construction/ada_access_map.pdf)

See http://www.opp.psu.edu/construction/ada_access_map.pdf

Test Results and Advice Nurse

Please call the nurse for test results and advice: 863-4463

Appointments

Appointments can be made in person or by phone. If you are unable to keep your appointment, please call and cancel. Otherwise you will be charged for the visit.

To schedule or cancel appointments, call: 863-0774

For more information about health care issues, visit the UHS Web site at www.sa.psu.edu/uhs

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