

## Everett Orthopedic Surgery Center

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# CRUTCH WALKING INSTRUCTIONS

- 1) **Fitting the crutches:** There should be 2-3 finger-widths of space between your underarms and the crutches. (Have another person measure when you are standing up straight with the tips of the crutches on the floor just to the outside of your toes.) Adjust the hand piece to allow your elbow to bend at a 300 angle.
- 2) **Walking:** Use your hands and arms for weightbearing, **not** your underarms. **Nerve damage can result from leaning your weight on your underarms.** Put both crutches and the weak leg forward at the same time. Then move the strong leg to meet them. Do not take steps that are too large (take small, slow steps until you become practiced on the crutches).
- 3) **To sit down in a chair:** Hold the crutches by the handpieces to steady your body, bend forward slightly, and sit down. Use the strong leg for bearing weight.
- 4) **To stand from a chair:** Move to the front edge of the chair. Put the strong leg slightly under the seat. Put both crutches in the hand on the side of the weak leg. Push down on the handpieces while raising the body to a standing position.
- 5) **To go up stairs or a curb:** Keep the crutches in place for support. Step up with the stronger leg first. Bring the crutches and the weaker leg up to the higher step.
- 6) **To go down stairs or a curb:** Place feet forward as far as possible on the step. Put the crutches down on the lower step. Put the weaker leg down while maintaining weight on the crutches and the strong leg. Lower the strong leg to the lower step.
- 7) **Safety precautions:** The crutches should be fitted with large rubber suction tips. The arm and handpieces should be fitted with foam rubber pads. Wear sturdy shoes with non-skid soles that fit well. Do not go barefoot or wear "flipflops", sandals, slingbacks, high heels, or slippers while walking with crutches. Remove throw rugs and other dangerous objects from your home.
- 8) Be sure someone is with you to help steady you, until you feel confident while walking with crutches, **especially if you have had a femoral block for surgery, as your surgical leg will-be weak until-the block wears off.**