

## Musculoskeletal Problems

### Types of Problems:

- Ankle Strain/Sprain
- Foot Pain
- Bruising/swelling
- Weakness or pain in extremity or with movement
- Muscle spasm
- Back Pain

### Seek Immediate Medical Care Through Emergency Room For:

- Bone is sticking through skin
- Bone deformity (appears crooked)
- Fever greater than 100.4° F and you feel ill
- Severe pain of affected area
- Severe back pain
- Loss of bowel and/or bladder control
- Numbness, tingling of groin

### Self-Care Treatment:

- Rest – Avoid any activity or movement that causes pain. Protect area from further injury
- Ice area – 20 minutes on, then off; several times (until appointment). Do not put ice directly on skin/injury – use a towel to prevent burns
- Compression – Wrap with ACE if you have one
- Elevate – Elevate affected area above heart if possible
- Take Pain Reliever – Ibuprofen (Advil) with food per package directions **or** Acetaminophen (Tylenol) per package directions
- Remove any tight items – i.e., shoe if ankle/foot injury
- Avoid long periods of sitting or standing
- Follow “Crutch Use” Handout (see next page) if crutches given in Student Health Services Clinic

### Call the on-campus Student Health Clinic or go to Urgent Care for medical attention for:

- Extremity swelling or bruising
- Extreme pain with movement
- Unable to walk without assistance
- Pain or numbness/tingling in arms or legs
- Pain with urination

**Please call to make an appointment at your on-campus Student Health Clinic or with your PCP or go to Urgent Care or the Emergency Department if your concerns do not improve with conservative self-care treatment or if you have worsening symptoms.**

**Please know your health problem and allergies. Information contained in this handout is for educational purposes only. It is not a substitute for evaluation and treatment by a Healthcare professional. As new and updated information becomes available, the content may change. Please contact your Healthcare Provider or the on-campus Student Health Clinic with any questions.**

# CRUTCHES

## What are crutches?

Crutches are supports that help you walk when you have an injured leg or foot.

## How do I use crutches?

- **Walking:** Bring the crutches forward evenly, keeping your injured leg off the ground. Lean forward, putting your weight on your hands against the grips of the crutches. Don't rest your armpits on the crutches because the pressure can cause damage to a nerve that passes through the armpit. Swing your good leg forward, placing your foot just in front of the crutches. Repeat. (Note: In some cases your healthcare provider may allow you to put some weight on your injured leg while you are using crutches.)
- **Getting up from a chair or bed:** Hold both crutches together by the grips in the hand on the side of the injured leg. Push up from the chair or bed with the other hand while you push up on the crutches. Use your good leg to bring you to a standing position. Get your balance and bring your crutches into position on either side of you before you start to walk.
- **Sitting down:** Hold your crutches together by the grips in the hand on the injured side. Hold onto the chair or bed with the other hand and lower yourself slowly. Unless you are allowed to put some weight on your injured leg, keep your injured leg off the ground and keep your weight on the good leg.
- **Stairs:** Going up, get close to the stairs. Step up with the good leg, then bring the crutches and the injured leg up to the step that the good leg is on. Repeat. Going down, first bring the crutches and the injured leg down to the lower step. Then step down with the good leg. Repeat. If there is a handrail, put both crutches under the opposite arm and use the rail for support. Remember: "Up with the good, down with the bad."

- **Going through doorways:** Be sure to 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. Walk through the doorway.

## How can I take care of myself while I'm using crutches?

Be careful not to slip on water or ice.

Sometimes crutches rub against the skin between your arm and chest. You may want to use body lotion or talcum powder to prevent skin chafing.

If your hands get sore or tired, you may want to put extra padding on the crutch grips.

Be sure not to lean on the crutches and put pressure on your armpits. If there is pressure on your armpits even when you use the crutches correctly, the crutches are too long and need to be shortened.

## HOW TO USE CRUTCHES

The shaded leg is the bad leg



Walking



Getting up



Sitting down



Going up



Going down

Using a handrail

Going through a doorway

GENERAL/MEDICAL