

## **fitting the crutches**

- There should be a 2-3 finger widths 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 30 degree angle.

## **safety precautions**

- Be sure your crutches have large rubber suction tips.
- The arm and hand pieces should be fitted with foam rubber pads to relieve pressure on your hands, upper arms and rib cage.
- Wear supportive, sturdy shoes with nonskid soles that fit well. Do not go barefoot or wear “flip-flops”, sandals, sling-backs, high heels or slippers while walking on crutches.
- Avoid wearing a long bathrobe, skirt, or loose-legged pants that could get tangled in the crutches.
- Permanent nerve damage with resulting “crutch paralysis” of the arms can result from leaning your weight on your underarms.
- Remove throw rugs and other dangerous objects from your home. Avoid deep pile carpet and grass when possible. Walk very carefully if you must be on wet or slippery surfaces.
- Be sure someone is in attendance to steady you until you feel confident while walking on crutches.

## **walking**

- Use your hands and arms for weight bearing, not 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 proficient on the crutches.
- For safety, advance your pace only as your physical ability improves.

## **to sit down in a chair**

- Hold the crutches by the hand pieces to steady your body, bend forward slightly and sit down. Use the strong leg for weight bearing.

## **to stand up from a chair**

- Move to the front 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 hand pieces while raising the body to a standing position.

## **to go up stairs or a curb**

- Keep the crutches in place for support.
- Step up with the stronger leg first.

## **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.