

# Crutches for Children

Crutch walking is difficult. Generally children need to be at least seven years old in order to manage crutches safely.

Each child should be carefully assessed before crutches are prescribed to ensure safety:

- Check weight bearing instruction for affected leg – if non weight bearing, no weight should pass through this leg at all.
- When teaching a child how to use crutches, position yourself close to the child to steady him as necessary. Be sure the child is safe before allowing independent use.
- Remember some children will not manage crutches safely and a walking frame or wheelchair will be the better option.

## Measuring crutches

- Crutch height should be 2–3 finger widths below armpits and handles should be positioned so that elbows are almost straight with the child standing.
- To measure crutches with child lying flat (**Figure 1**):
  - shoulders are relaxed (not hitched up)
  - measure from two finger widths below armpits to base of heel (toes pointing to ceiling)
  - for handle height measure from wrist crease to base of heel with elbow almost straight
  - check again with the child standing that the crutches are the correct height; adjust as necessary

## Stand with crutches – Non weight bearing

- Hold both crutches firmly in one hand, other hand on seat or arm rest (**Figure 2a**).
- Keep non-affected foot flat on floor.
- Slide bottom forward towards edge of seat.
- Lean forward, then stand (**Figure 2b**).
- Place crutches under each arm (**Figure 2c**).
- Push through wrists, while keeping crutch pads firmly against chest wall.
- Do not lean through armpits.

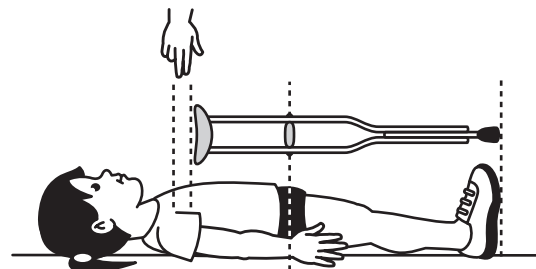


Figure 1. Correct measuring for crutches.

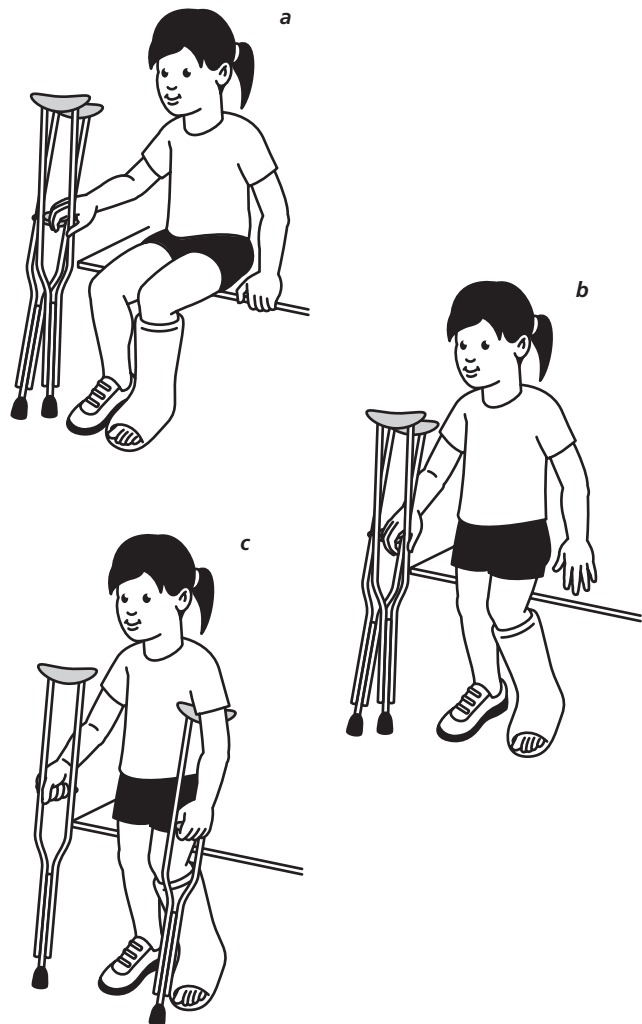


Figure 2. Sequence for standing with crutches.

## Crutch walking – Non weight bearing

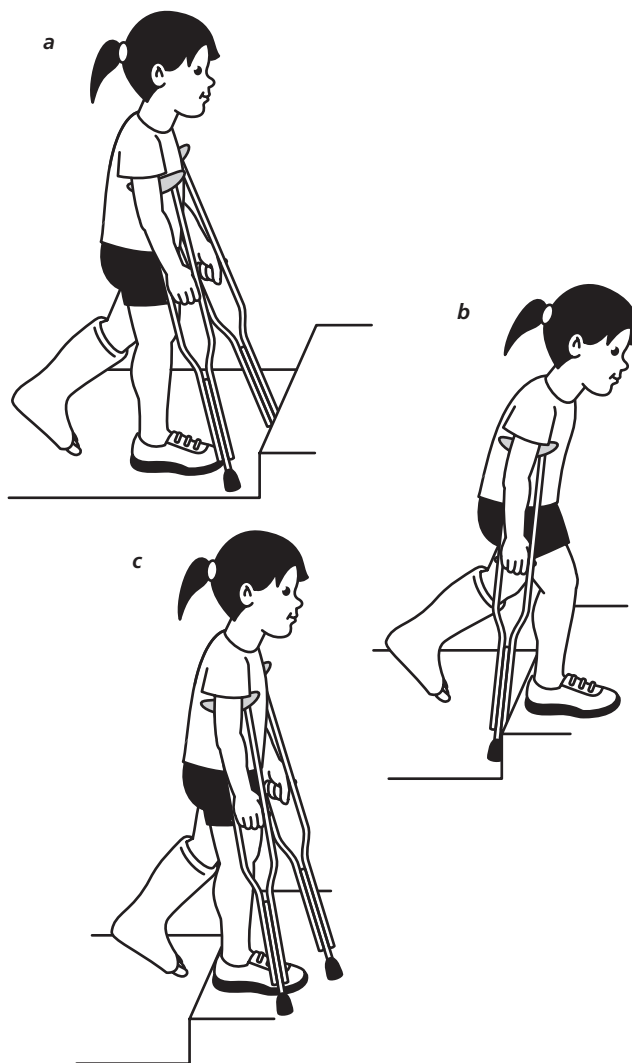
- Move crutches forward – not too wide, not too narrow.
- Lean forward to bring weight over crutches, then pushing through arms, hop through with unaffected foot.

## Crutch walking up stairs – Non weight bearing

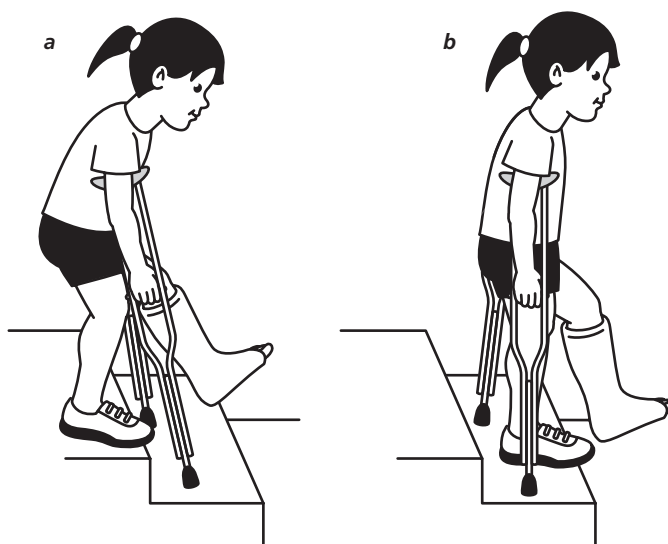
- Place crutches close to step (**Figure 3a**).
- Pushing through arms, lean forward to bring weight over crutches, then hop onto first step with unaffected foot (**Figure 3b**).
- Straighten body while bringing crutches up onto the first step (**Figure 3c**).
- Continue carefully up the stairs.
- Always position yourself close to the child to steady him/her if necessary.
- If unsafe, child may sit on step and go up on bottom.

## Crutch walking downstairs – Non weight bearing

- Place crutches carefully down to step below.
- Move affected foot out in front of crutches and lean slightly forward in order to bring weight through crutches (**Figure 4a**).
- Pushing firmly through arms, step down onto unaffected foot (**Figure 4b**).
- Continue slowly down stairs repeating the sequence.
- Always position yourself close to child to steady if necessary.
- If unsafe, child may sit on step and come down steps on bottom.



**Figure 3.** Sequence for walking up stairs with crutches.



**Figure 4.** Sequence for walking down stairs with crutches.