

# Safe use of crutches

## Physiotherapy

### Weight-bearing status

☐ **FWB – Full weight-bearing**

You can place all your weight normally through your operated leg.

☐ **WBAT – Weight-bearing as tolerated**

You can place as much weight through your operated leg as pain allows.

As the pain eases place more weight through your operated leg until you are fully weight-bearing.

☐ **PWB – Partial weight-bearing**

Place half your weight through your operated leg, and half your weight through your crutches as you walk.

☐ **TWB – Touch/Toe weight-bearing**

You may place a very small amount of weight through your operated leg when walking. Imagine you are walking on an egg carton, but don't want to squash it. Usually this contact with the ground is enough to take the weight of your operated leg only (i.e. balance on the ground), but without placing any additional body weight through your operated leg.

☐ **NWB – Non weight-bearing**

You are unable to place any weight through your operated leg at all.

### Advice for placing weight through your operated leg

- Using crutches after the operation takes some pressure off the knee and helps to ensure you learn to walk without a limp.
- The idea is that you 'train' yourself to WALK NORMALLY using the crutches, so that you do not have a limp when you come off them.
- Often you can go onto using just one crutch (in the opposite hand to your operated leg) for short distances around the house. Continue to use the crutches for longer walks or if spending more time on your feet until you have no pain or limp or until your surgeon tells you.

*Please also refer overleaf...*

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### Precautions when using crutches

Ensure crutches are the correct height for you. Your physiotherapist can check this whilst you are in hospital.

- Use appropriate footwear (no loose footwear).
- Check the rubber stoppers at the bottom of the crutches are not worn away or damaged.
- If walking outside in wet conditions take extra care, and don't rush. Ensure rubber stoppers are dry when entering a building. They can potentially slip on hard floors.
- When turning, take little steps around, never pivot on one leg.

### Advice for managing stairs when using crutches

Whilst you are in hospital, your physiotherapist will demonstrate how to go up and down stairs using crutches and you will practice with the physiotherapist present. If you have a rail, use the rail instead of a crutch on that side.

- **Going up stairs:** Good leg first, sore leg next, crutches (*all onto the same step*).
- **Going down stairs:** Crutches first, sore leg next, good leg last (*all onto the same step*).



*It may help to remember the phrase "Good leg to heaven, sore leg to hell."*

*Please also refer overleaf...*