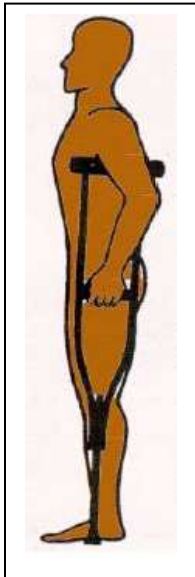


## Measuring and Using Crutches

Walking aids are used by a variety of people. This includes people recovering from injury, people with reduced balance strength and endurance, or people with pain or instability in any weight bearing joint used in walking.

The choice of walking aid should suit a person's abilities and personal requirements. It is recommended to seek the assistance of a physiotherapist in this process.

A physiotherapist is also able to provide advice and training in the correct use of the device.



### **MEASURING**

#### Axilla (underarm) Style Crutches

Measure from 5cm under the user's armpit to a point on the ground about 15cm out from the side of the heel. This is the overall height and where the axilla pad should be set. Adjust the overall height by moving the centre post at the bottom up and down and securing in the right position.

Take the measurement from the wrist crease to the same point on the ground as the first. This is the height for the hand grips to be set.

#### Elbow Style Crutches

The handle height for these crutches can be measured as for the handles above. The lower end of the shaft can then be adjusted to make the handle the correct height. The forearm piece length can be measured from a clenched fist to 2.5cm from the elbow crease.

Adjust the shaft to this length. The cuff should not allow the crutch to fall off the arm, such as when the user opens a door.

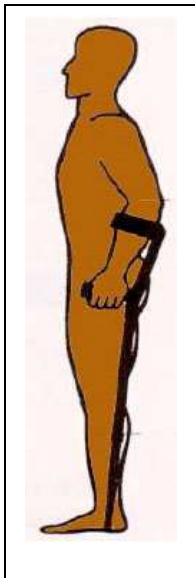
#### Forearm (gutter) Style Crutches

Measure the height from the forearm to the ground, when the forearm is at 90 degrees to the elbow. Adjust the hand grips position and length to the point of comfort for the user.

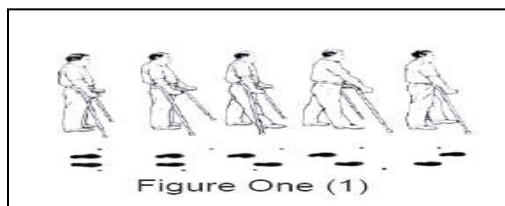
### **USE**

The weight should be taken through the hands on the hand pads (or the forearms in the case of gutter crutches). The axilla pads should be pressed against the chest wall, not high under the armpits.

The crutches should be positioned slightly to the side and forward to maintain a stable base.



If the affected leg is to be partial weight bearing, then the user should place the crutches forward, then the affected leg, then share the load between the crutches and that leg while the unaffected leg is brought forward.



A four-point gait may be used for general weakness and is slow and safe. This involves putting one crutch forward, then the opposite leg, then the other crutch forward of the first one, followed by the other leg.

If the user is not to bear any weight through the affected leg, then both crutches should be put forward and the user should hop towards the space between them, to just behind the crutches. The affected leg should be held in front of the body clear of the ground.

Forearm crutches can be unstable with a full load, and may not be recommended for non-weight bearing use.

### STEPS AND STAIRS

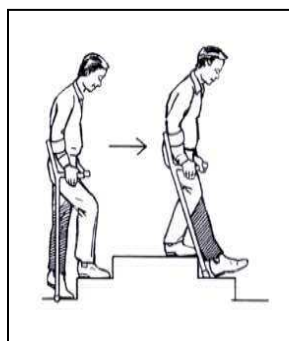
#### Going Up:

Lift the unaffected leg up the step first while taking the weight on the crutches and the affected leg if bearing partial weight on it.

Then bring the crutches and the affected leg onto the same step.

#### Going Down:

Lower the affected leg and the crutches down the step first, then bring the unaffected leg down to the same step.



### SAFETY

- Do not let axilla crutches press under the arm, as this can cause damage to important fragile nerves there.
- Concentrate when using crutches, especially when non weight bearing.
- Keep the rubber tips in good condition.
- Be extra careful in wet areas and on uneven ground.
- Make sure all fastenings are secured tightly.

### NEED TO KNOW MORE?

Telephone, fax or e-mail your enquiry to obtain further information from one of the therapists about products. Alternatively, you can make an appointment to trial the equipment at our display centres or through our outreach service. Please phone LifeTec for further details.

Last Updated: March 2009