

CONNECTICUT VALLEY HOSPITAL

Physical Therapy Services

PT Equipment Procedure # 4

Re: Axillary/Forearm Crutches

Date: March 20, 2000

Revised: October 19, 2008

Description:

High-strength dual or single upright aluminum or wood assistive ambulation device with adjustable height of arm and handgrips to accommodate heights from 4'7" to 6'6".

Indications:

To provide protective weight bearing for healing fractures, sprains, and ligamentous tears used to increase base of support and therefore improve balance and gait stability.

Precaution:

Type of crutches (Axillary or Forearm) should be determined by a physical therapist. Improper usage of axillary crutches can cause axillary compression injury. Crutch fit and gait pattern should be checked.

Procedure:

Fitting – Use parallel bars and safety belt for fitting and assessment.

- A. **Axillary** – Fit with the patient standing. The crutch height with the pads should be 2" below the axilla. Handgrips should be even with wrist level to provide approximately 15° of elbow flexion with the crutches positioned one foot to the side and in front of the feet.
- B. **Forearm** – Fit with the patient standing. Position the cuff around the forearm and reduce or elevate the height of the crutch so that it provides 15-20° of elbow flexion when the crutch is one foot to the side and in front of the feet. These are intended for long-term usage.

Basic Principles – Bilateral crutch use is determined by the prescription and skill level of the patient.

- 1. Non Weight Bearing – No weight allowed on the extremity.
- 2. Partial Weight Bearing – 10 pounds maximum allowed on the extremity.
- 3. Weight to Tolerance – Weight bearing to the point of discomfort. If no pain, patient may bear full weight.

Gait Patterns

Four Point Gait

1. Left crutch, right crutch, left foot, right foot.
2. Left crutch, right foot, right crutch, left foot.

Three Point Gait

1. Left crutch, right crutch, involved foot, uninvolved foot.
2. Right and left crutches, involved foot, uninvolved foot.

Two Point Alternating Gait

1. Right crutch and left foot simultaneously, then left crutch and right foot simultaneously.

Two Point Swing Through Gait

1. Right and left crutch, then both feet simultaneously (or one if Non-Weight Bearing).