
Physiotherapy Department

Patientline exercise programme

The following exercises are one of a series of four programmes recommended during your stay at Addenbrooke's Hospital. It complements the exercises available to view on your Patientline monitor. You are advised to consult your ward physiotherapist before starting these exercises.

1. Breathing exercises

Abdominal breathing

a) Technique one

Find a comfortable position in sitting or lay on your side, then place one hand on your abdomen and the second on the upper chest. As you breathe, observe the motion of you hands rising as you breathe in and falling as you breathe out. You may notice that one hand moves more than the other. In order to achieve efficient breathing you should get air down to the bottom of your lungs. Therefore as you breathe in try and alter your breathing so that your abdomen swells with air and only the lower hand rises. Continue in this manner, taking slow, consistent breaths at your normal resting rate, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Ensure your shoulders and neck are relaxed. Try to repeat this for ten good breaths every waking hour to carry over the benefit.

b) Technique two

This technique again aims to fill the bottom of your lungs with air, by focussing on the outward movement of your ribs. Find a comfortable position in sitting or lay on your side and place your hands just below your ribs with your fingers loosely linked. Hold them there lightly in this position. As you breathe in, your fingers should slide apart; as you breathe out they should return together. Continue in this manner, taking slow, consistent breaths at your normal resting volume, breathing in through your nose and out through your mouth. Ensure your shoulders and neck are relaxed. Try to repeat this for ten good breaths every waking hour to carry over the benefit.

Positions for relaxed breathing

The following describes two suggestions for relaxed breathing, especially if you find your breathing more difficult.

Forward lean

Move to sitting on the edge of your bed if possible or remain sitting in your chair, ensuring your feet are resting on the ground. Move your table so that it is in front of you and place some pillows on to it. Relax forward onto the pillows, with your arms above your head, and your head turned to the side. Ensure your head, neck and shoulders are as relaxed as possible. Focus on relaxed abdominal breathing.

High side lie

Bring the head of the bed up, and then position yourself on your side with pillows at your head so that you are comfortable. Bring your arm across your body and let it rest in front of you, allowing this motion to bring your tummy forwards and away from you as well. You may want to place a pillow under this arm and also behind your back for comfort and security. Allow your hips and knees to bend, as comfortable, with a pillow between your knees if you wish.

This is an ideal position for practising your breathing control.

This project was developed by Caroline Stoneham, Senior Physiotherapist, from an original idea conceived by Duncan Forsyth, Consultant Geriatrician, and has been supported by a grant from Addenbrooke's Charitable Trust (ACT).



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Authors	Senior II Physiotherapist
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