

## Help with this leaflet:



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216032 or [patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk](mailto:patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk)



We are currently working towards a smoke-free site. Smoking is only permitted in the designated smoking areas.

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## Document history

Authors	Physiotherapy Department
Department	Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, Hills Road, Cambridge, CB2 0QQ <a href="http://www.cuh.org.uk">www.cuh.org.uk</a>
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# In Patient Physiotherapy

## Patient Information

### Exercising during cancer



## Benefits of exercise for people with cancer

It is important that you continue with some form of exercise and activity while you are in hospital to maintain your level of fitness so that you will be able to cope better when you are at home.

With the treatment you are receiving you may experience some better days than others. This leaflet is designed to advise you on exercises and activities that you can do even when you are not feeling your best. For further information about your treatment and care please ask the staff on your ward.

Research has shown numerous benefits of exercising for cancer patients. Low intensity exercise undertaken for 30 minutes a day whilst undergoing treatment has been shown to minimise cancer related fatigue (which is aggravated during chemotherapy/ radiotherapy). The lower the fatigue you experience the better your overall function and mood will be and hence, the higher the chances of a good recovery and early discharge from hospital.

It is also known that inactivity coupled with decreased calorific intake and chemo and radiotherapy leads to severe loss of muscle strength. Studies in cancer patients have shown that low intensity exercise which raises your heart rate helps to maintain and increase your muscle bulk which enhances overall function. However, it is important not to do high intensity exercise as it increases your body's demand for protein and can therefore be detrimental to your recovery as your body needs these nutrients in help the healing process.

## Exercise diary

Use of an exercise diary has been shown to be helpful in keeping a record of activities each day. It can also help increase your motivation to continue with your programme.

Below is an example of an exercise diary. Useful information to include is what exercises/ activity you have undertaken, how you felt that day, and any other information that you feel is relevant to your exercise.

DATE	What exercise/ activity?	How did you feel?	Any other comments
26/11/08	Exercise 1-5 Walked two times up/down the ward	Quite hard work but managed. Only two reps of each	Nil
27/11/08	Exercies 1-5 Walked down to concourse	Easier today One more rep on each exercise	Felt good about everything today
28/11/08	Breathing exercise	Couldn't do anything else as felt too tired	Started chemo today

## Other exercises

1. Standing in front of a step, step up \_\_\_\_ times with one leg leading and then repeat with the other leg leading.
2. Static bikes are available on the ward. Your physiotherapist will advise you if these are an appropriate addition to your programme.
3. Walk up and down the ward/ around your room \_\_\_\_\_ times a day with or without assistance.

Your exercise programmes can start even before your treatment begins, and should last throughout your treatment period. You should follow the advice of your doctor but exercise is safe immediately after chemotherapy in most cases.

## What can you expect from physiotherapy?

Members of the physiotherapy team include qualified physiotherapists and physiotherapy assistants. You will be assessed and reviewed by a physiotherapist depending on your level of function; but are likely to be treated by both during your in-patient stay.

At your initial assessment, the physiotherapist will ask questions about your current level of activity. From the information gathered you will be set an exercise programme. The programme will include exercises from this leaflet and may also include other individualised exercises depending on your needs.

The exercise programme will be designed for you to carry out independently but if you have any questions the nurses on your ward can contact a member of the physiotherapy team. A member of the physiotherapy team will review the exercise programme as needed. If a more regular input is indicated then this will be provided.

Some of the exercises in the programme are designed so that they can be carried out even if you are not feeling very well, for example; breathing exercises and bed exercises.

Your friends and relatives can be a great source of support and encouragement. Involve them in your exercise programme by getting them to read this information leaflet, and encourage them to prompt or remind you to exercise a bit every day.

## Exercises

### 1. Breathing exercises

Find a comfortable position in either a lying or sitting position, for example see the pictures below. This technique aims to fill the bottom of your lungs with air, by focussing on the outward movement of your ribs. 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.

### 3. Chair exercises

The following exercises can all be practised from the starting position below:



1. Tap your toes and then your heels, on the floor alternately. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times
2. Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee. Hold for \_\_\_\_\_ seconds. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times on each leg.
3. March your legs up and down lifting your knees towards the ceiling. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.
4. Stand up and then sit down slowly on a chair. If you need to you can use your arms to help you stand. Repeat \_\_\_\_\_ times.

3. Squeeze your buttocks together and lift your bottom off the bed. Hold for \_\_\_\_ seconds and then return to the starting position. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



1. Rotate your ankle in a full circle in both directions and then repeat with the other foot. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times
2. Tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee. Lift your leg \_\_\_\_ cm off the bed. Hold for \_\_\_\_ secs and repeat \_\_\_\_ times.



The third picture above shows a position that you could adopt if you began to feel short of breath while you are standing or walking around.

## 2. Bed exercises

The following exercises can all be practised from the starting position shown above each set of explanations:



1. Straighten and bend your legs one at a time. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times
2. With your knees together slowly roll them from side to side keeping your upper trunk still. Repeat \_\_\_\_ times