Physiotherapy Department

Using a continuous passive motion (CPM) machine

This leaflet explains more about using the continuous passive motion (CPM) machine after your knee surgery.

If you have any further questions, please speak to the physiotherapist caring for you.

What is a CPM machine?
A CPM is an electronic machine that slowly and gently helps your knee to bend following surgery, when it feels tight and stiff.

Why do I need to use a CPM?
A CPM is needed to help your knee to bend when you are finding it too difficult to bend it yourself. After knee surgery, it is important to get your knee bending as soon as possible.

How long do I need to use the CPM for?
Your physiotherapist will tell you how long to use the CPM for – it depends on your individual need. You may need to use it for one longer session or for shorter periods of time with rests in between (such as 45 minutes at a time with breaks).

What if my knee is too painful to use the CPM?
It is important to make sure that you have had enough pain relief to use the CPM as guided. You should discuss your pain relief with your nurse and physiotherapist caring for you if you feel it is not sufficient.

You can also use ice packs to help relieve pain and swelling around your knee. Please discuss it with your physiotherapist if you would like to try ice packs.

How do I use the CPM?
Your physiotherapist will help you to place your leg on the CPM correctly and set the CPM at a comfortable level for you. Once this has been done, they will show you how to adjust the CPM using the handset.

The next page of this leaflet has a picture of the handset and instructions on how to use it.
What else can I do to help my knee bend?

You may still find it difficult to bend your knee when not using the CPM. This is because the CPM does not use your leg muscles, but only moves the joint. It is therefore important that you also continue with the active exercise programme that your physiotherapist will show you.

What should I do if I have a problem?

If you have a problem with your CPM, press the red STOP button and then press your nursing call bell for assistance. The nursing staff can contact your physiotherapist if they are unable to help you with the problem.

Contact us

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) – To make comments or raise concerns about the Trust’s services, please contact PALS. Ask a member of staff to direct you to the PALS office or:
t: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas’
t: 020 7188 8803 at Guy’s e: pals@gstt.nhs.uk

Knowledge & Information Centre (KIC) – For more information about health conditions, support groups and local services, or to search the internet and send emails, please visit the KIC on the Ground Floor, North Wing, St Thomas’ Hospital.
t: 020 7188 3416

Language support services – If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch using the following contact details.
t: 020 7188 8815 fax: 020 7188 5953

NHS Direct – Offers health information and advice from specially trained nurses over the phone 24 hours a day.
t: 0845 4647 w: www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk