

Exercising and physiotherapy

This leaflet explains how you can help yourself to progress and develop your general exercising activity as a physiotherapy patient. It also explains how you can 'regress' your exercise – going back one or two steps if you're experiencing an increase in pain or an irritation of your symptoms.

An exercise programme that includes strength, endurance, balance and flexibility exercises give the best overall benefits for your rehabilitation.

Warming up

Begin your sessions with a warm up of marching and sidestepping. This is very important as it prepares the body for increased activity and helps reduce the risk of straining or aggravating your symptoms.

Strength exercises

Muscles need to be worked a little harder than usual to enable them to become stronger. This gives them the power needed to run for the bus, kick a ball or carry a heavy load.

Strengthening exercises can include working the core, squats, lunges, and bicep curls. You should aim to do the exercises 8-12 times (repetitions) over 2-4 sets.

Ways to progress

- Increase the amount of repetitions and sets – continue the exercise until you feel fatigue, (not pain) have a short rest then repeat.
- Use a static hold during the exercise – start with three seconds and gradually increase then try combinations of holds; quickly up, hold, then slowly down (for example, three seconds up and five seconds down) or slowly up and quickly down. This challenges the different ways the muscle contracts.
- Hold a weight while doing an exercise and gradually increase the weight.
- Use a resistance band and increase the resistance with different bands.

Endurance exercises

Endurance or aerobic exercise helps to condition the heart and lungs while allowing the muscles to work longer before tiring. Examples can include walking, jogging, swimming, rowing or cycling.

You should be able to talk whilst doing aerobic exercise, as this will help you to know that you are doing it at the right intensity.

Ways to progress

- Gradually increase the pace of the exercise.
- Do the exercise for longer – for example, build up to 10, 20, 30 minutes and more.
- Do the exercise more times during the week.

If you want to improve muscle endurance when exercising with weights it is best to aim for 15-25 repetitions in two sets using low weights.

Balance exercises

Balance exercises help you to maintain co-ordination when walking, going up stairs, dancing or reaching for things.

Ways to progress

- Stance – begin with feet shoulder width apart, one foot in front of the other and feet close together when performing exercise.
- Surface – stable to unstable; standing on a pillow, foam cushion or wobble board.
- Stand – both feet, then progress to one foot as the exercise becomes easier.
- Reach – out from the body while keeping balanced, for example, throwing and catching at different heights or standing on one leg while pointing to the numbers of an imaginary clock on the floor with the other foot.

Flexibility exercises

Regular stretches are a great way of increasing the flexibility of your muscles as it helps them work throughout their full range. Hold the stretch for 15 -30 seconds

What to do if you experience pain or a worsening of your symptoms

Remember that some discomfort in the muscles is normal after exercise, especially if you have not exercised for a while. Including cool down exercises and stretches at the end of your session will help the muscles adapt more quickly.

If you experience an increase in pain or an irritation of your symptoms, you may have progressed too soon. If this is the case, going back one or two steps or 'regressing' your exercise programme gives the muscles a chance to get used to the extra workload.

- Try reducing the weight and / or the amount of sets and repetitions you are doing.
- Reduce the distances and / or number of days you are exercising.

Returning to your previous level of exercise for a short time will help your symptoms settle. Then, progress the exercises again, this time more slowly.

If you would like any guidance with how best to use this information in your individual physiotherapy programmes then please ask us; we'll be happy to help.

Contact us

If you would like further information about this leaflet, or have any questions, then please contact the physiotherapy team:

t: 020 7188 5101 or 020 7188 5103

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/leaflets

Appointments at King's

We have teamed up with King's College Hospital in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at King's. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

Useful information

Pharmacy Medicines Helpline

If you have any questions or concerns about your medicines, please speak to the staff caring for you or call our helpline.

t: 020 7188 8748 9am to 5pm, Monday to Friday

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:

e: 020 7188 8801 at St Thomas' **t:** 020 7188 8803 at Guy's **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

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 111

Offers medical help and advice from fully trained advisers supported by experienced nurses and paramedics. Available over the phone 24 hours a day.

t: 111

NHS Choices

Provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make choices about your health.

w: www.nhs.uk

Become a member of your local hospitals, and help shape our future

Membership is free and it is completely up to you how much you get involved. To become a member of our Foundation Trust, you need to be 18 years of age or over, live in Lambeth, Southwark, Lewisham, Wandsworth or Westminster or have been a patient at either hospital in the last five years.

To join, please call 0848 143 4017, email members@gstt.nhs.uk or visit www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk

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