

Exercising during dialysis

This leaflet explains more about how exercising can help you when you are on dialysis. If you have any further questions, please speak to a doctor or nurse caring for you.

Introduction

Everyone knows that exercise is good for you. It can help to:

- control your blood pressure
- strengthen your heart
- make you more independent
- lift your mood and increase well-being
- increase your energy levels and endurance
- lose or control your weight
- improve anaemia
- improve blood sugar control
- strengthen your muscles.

Additional benefits of exercising during dialysis

Exercising during dialysis = more effective dialysis

Exercise is as important for your treatment as your medication. It can improve the efficiency of your dialysis by removing substances such as urea and creatinine, which are waste products from the liver and muscles, and aiding the removal of such toxins from the blood. This is especially important when you are on dialysis because your kidneys are unable to remove these effectively on their own.

Kidney disease makes muscles weak so it is important to maintain muscle strength and exercise tolerance. Exercise will help you carry out your everyday activities such as walking, housework, and staying as independent as possible.

Exercising while on dialysis can improve cramping that can often be experienced during dialysis sessions.

We recommend that you exercise for at least 30 minutes, at moderate intensity, five times a week. Exercising during your dialysis treatment is a good use of your time to achieve this.

Ways to enjoy your exercise

The main type of exercise we promote in the dialysis units is cycling – you can do this while you are receiving dialysis. Studies have shown this is an effective form of exercise to help improve your dialysis and exercise tolerance. If you wish to start exercising on the unit, please speak to your nurse who can get you started and bring this to the attention of the physiotherapy team.

In most dialysis units there are bikes that can be attached to the dialysis chairs, as well as dumbbells and ankle weights that you can use while you are receiving your treatment. The physiotherapist can visit you on the unit to assess and adapt your exercise programme, and to review your progress. Nursing staff in the dialysis units are fully trained to assist you with any equipment and help you may need.

Motivation is the key

Your physiotherapist will help you find an exercise programme that you like, and together you can set a goal you would like to achieve.

There are also plenty of options available outside of the unit that will enable you to continue your exercise plan. You can:

- join a physiotherapy-led renal rehabilitation programme at Guy's Hospital, which runs for 12 weeks on a weekly basis (there is a similar class at King's College Hospital if Dulwich is easier for you to get to)
- speak to a physiotherapist or GP about any exercise-on-referral schemes in your local borough, which can give you access to local gyms, classes and walking groups under supervision from fitness instructors trained in exercising with long term health conditions such as kidney disease
- include an exercise plan at home to help increase your activity levels.

Please ask your physiotherapist for more information about any of the options above.

Can I exercise with other health conditions?

Yes. There are actually very few medical conditions where exercise will not improve your recovery time, and make you feel better. It may be necessary for your physiotherapist to slightly adjust the exercise to suit some medical conditions. If you are not sure, please speak to your consultant and/or physiotherapist for individual advice.

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 sources of information

The British Renal Society promotes patient-centred, multi-professional care, education and research in kidney disease and its management. **w:** www.britishrenal.org

The Guy's and St Thomas' Kidney Patients' Association (KPA) raises funds to support research, improve the patient experience and help kidney patients, their families and carers achieve a good quality of life. **w:** www.gsttkpa.org

The National Kidney Foundation provides patient services, education and research to prevent kidney disease, and promotes organ donation. **w:** www.kidney.org

The Kidney Patient Guide is an experiment in online patient information – for kidney patients and those who care for them. **w:** www.kidneypatientguide.org.uk

Kidney Research UK funds research into kidney disease and to increase public awareness of kidney health. **w:** www.kidneyresearchuk.org

The British Kidney Patient Association (BKPA) offers support, advice, respite care, and financial help to kidney patients on dialysis. Also campaigns on behalf of patients.

w: www.britishkidney-pa.co.uk/patient-info

Contact us

If you have any questions about your exercise programme, please contact the Renal Physiotherapy Team, Basement Gym, Tower Wing, Guy's Hospital, Great Maze Pond, London SE1 9RT, **t:** 020 7188 5106, **e:** renalrehab@gstt.nhs.uk

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

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

Your comments and concerns

For advice, support or to raise a concern, contact our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS). To make a complaint, contact the complaints department.

t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS) **e:** pals@gstt.nhs.uk

t: 020 7188 3514 (complaints) **e:** complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk

Language and accessible support services

If you need an interpreter or information about your care in a different language or format, please get in touch.

t: 020 7188 8815 **e:** languagesupport@gstt.nhs.uk

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

Get involved and have your say: become a member of the Trust

Members of Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust contribute to the organisation on a voluntary basis. We count on them for feedback, local knowledge and support. Membership is free and it is up to you how much you get involved. To find out more, please get in touch.

t: 0800 731 0319 **e:** members@gstt.nhs.uk **w:** www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/membership

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