

# Dialysis exercise programme

This leaflet explains about exercising while you are on dialysis. If you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact your physiotherapist.

## When should I exercise?

- Carry out your programme after at least 30 minutes on dialysis, but avoid the last two hours on dialysis.
- Do not exercise if:
  - you have chest pain
  - you feel very breathless before dialysis
  - you have a high temperature
  - your blood pressure is very high or very low.
- Wear appropriate clothes and well-fitting closed in shoes and aim to have a comfortable position in the chair if you use the static bike.
- Always carry out your programme as instructed by your physiotherapist.

**Stop exercising and inform a member of staff immediately** if you experience:

- chest pain
- dizziness
- a new pain in one of your joints
- feeling unwell.

## What type of exercise should I do?

The best exercise is gentle cycling for 30 minutes. If you are unable to cycle for some reason, use this booklet to agree a set of arm and leg exercises with your physiotherapist. If you have a fistula you may only carry out exercises on dialysis on the non-fistula arm. You can complete the exercises on the fistula arm when you are not on dialysis.

### Cycling

There are cycling machines that you can use while you are having dialysis. Your nurse or physiotherapist will set this up for you.

- To warm up and cool down, cycle for up to five minutes at a **light** intensity on a **low** resistance, at the beginning and end of your cycling session. You should feel your muscles working but you should not feel out of breath.
- On your first session, aim to cycle for at least five minutes so that you are working **somewhat hard**. You may need to increase the resistance to do this.
- You should be slightly breathless and be able to say three or four words before catching your breath, and feel that your heart is pumping faster than normal.
- Aim to add an extra five minutes each week until you reach your goal of 40 minutes per session (including the warm up and cool down).

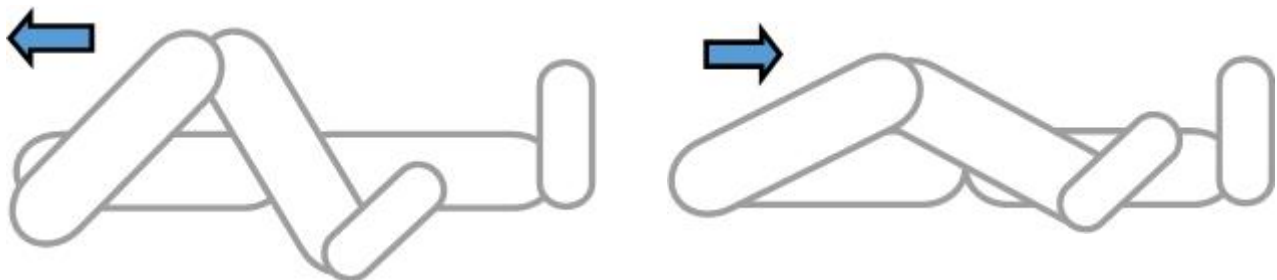
## Leg exercises

### 1. Ankle pumps



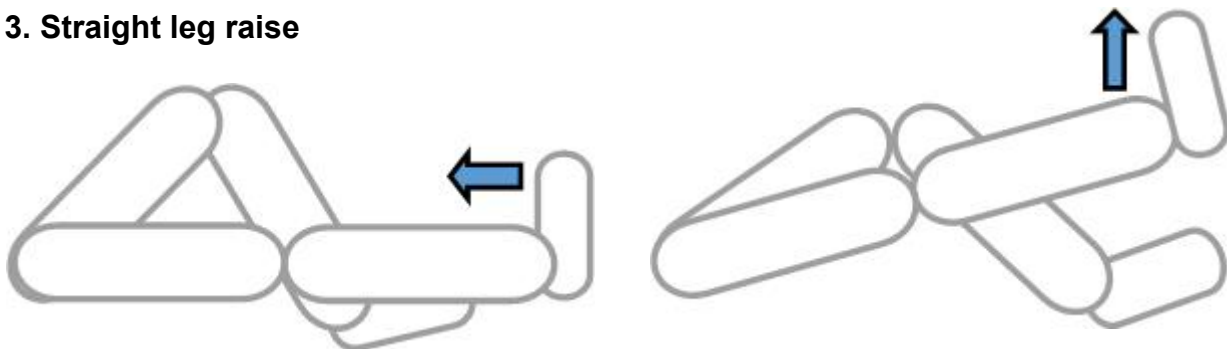
- Sit with your knees straight
- Move your feet up and down quickly one at a time.
- Repeat 8 to 10 times with each leg.

### 2. Knee bends



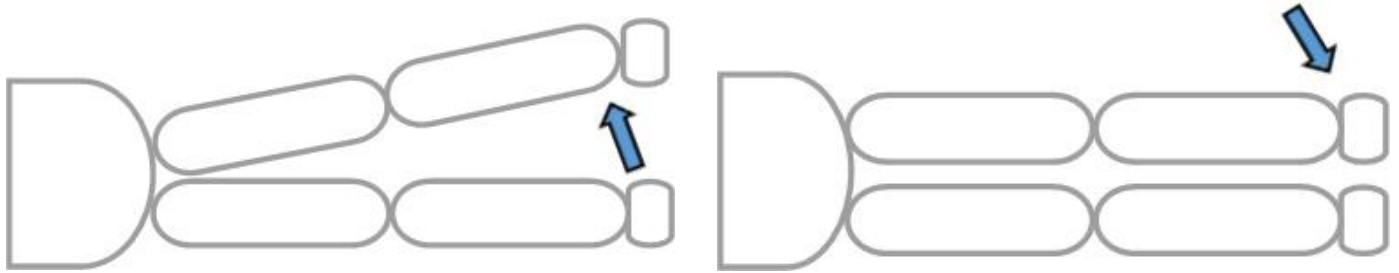
- Sit with your knees straight.
- Bend your knee by sliding your foot towards your bottom, keeping your foot on the chair.
- Slowly straighten your leg again, returning it to the starting position.
- Repeat 8 to 12 times with each leg.

### 3. Straight leg raise



- Strap a weight around each ankle.
- Bend one knee so your foot is flat on the bed
- With other knee straight, pull your toes towards you
- Lift your leg up to 20cm (eight inches) straight off the chair/bed. Hold for 3 to 10 seconds
- Slowly return to the starting position.
- Repeat 8 to 12 times with each leg.

#### 4. Hip abduction



- Sit with your knees straight and a weight strapped around each ankle.
- Pull your toes up towards you.
- Smoothly slide your leg out to the side.
- Slowly return your leg to the middle starting position.
- Repeat 8 to 12 times with each leg.

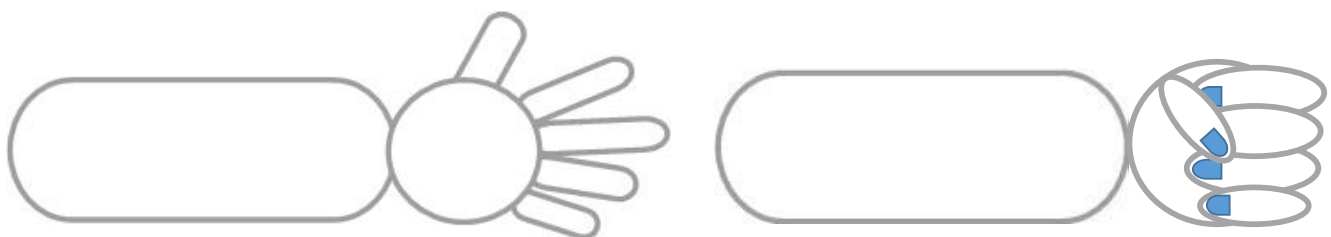
#### 5. Knee extension



- Sit with a rolled up towel under your knee and a weight strapped around your ankle.
- Pull your toes up towards you and tighten the front of your thigh muscle.
- Smoothly straighten your knee and hold for 3 to 10 seconds then slowly return your leg to the starting position. Repeat 8 to 12 times with each leg.

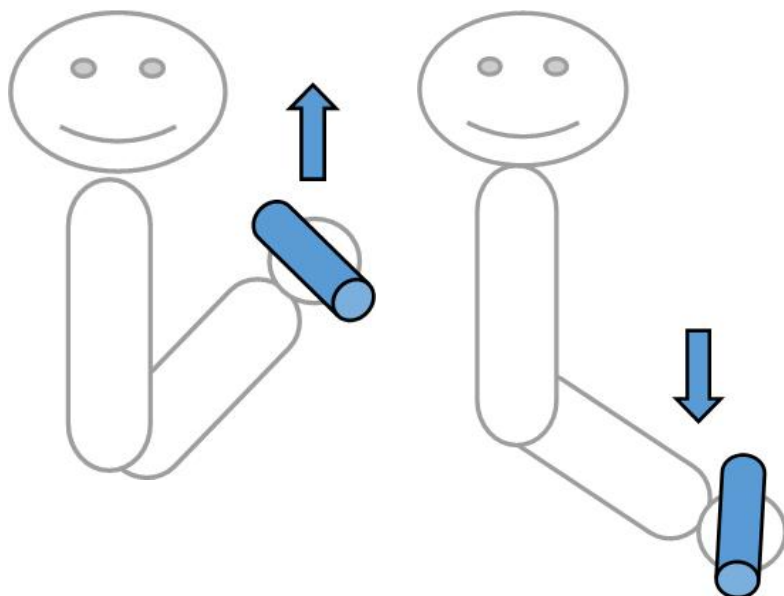
### Arm exercises

#### 1. Fist pumps



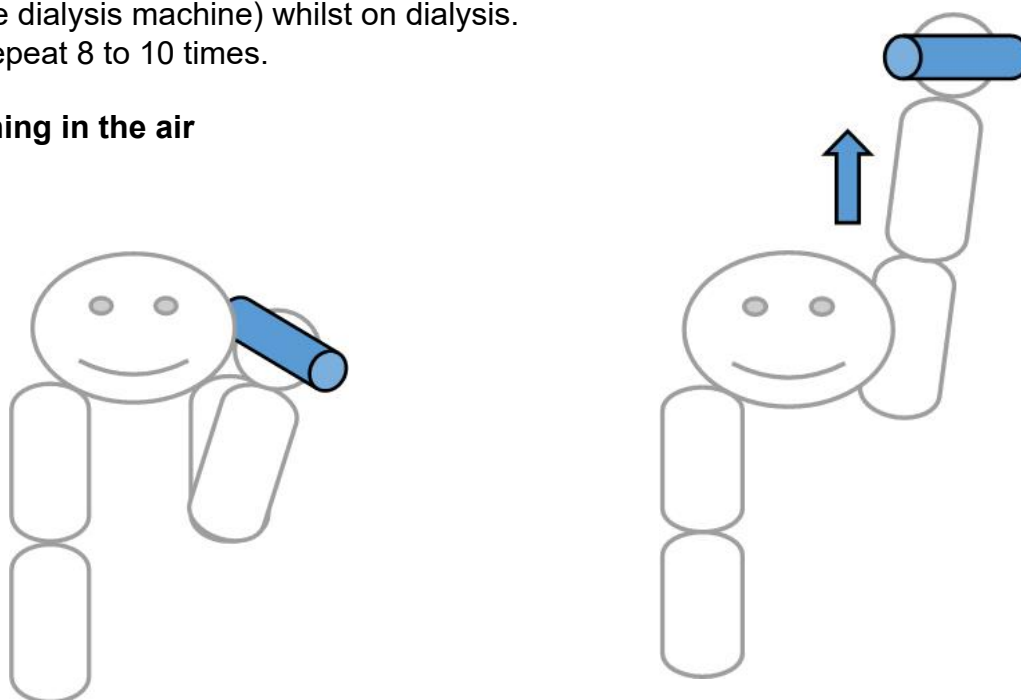
- Keep your arm relaxed on your lap/arm rest.
- Tuck your elbow into your side with your palm facing upwards.
- Make a fist and hold for two to three seconds.
- Slowly relax your hand and return to the starting position. **Only do this exercise with your non-fistula arm (the arm that is not connected to the dialysis machine) whilst on dialysis.**
- Repeat 8 to 10 times.

## 2. Bicep curls



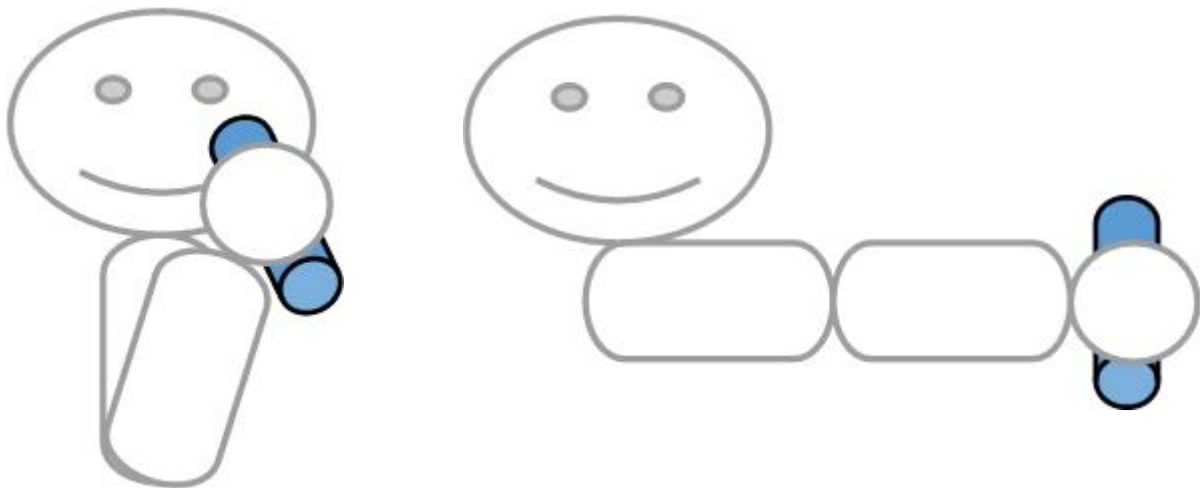
- Hold the weight in your non-fistula arm. Tuck your elbow into your side with your palm facing upwards.
- Bend your elbow, slowly raising the weight up to your shoulder. Keep your elbow tucked in to your side.
- Slowly lower the weight back down to the starting position.
- **Only do this exercise with your non-fistula arm** (the arm that is not connected to the dialysis machine) whilst on dialysis.
- Repeat 8 to 10 times.

## 3. Punching in the air



- Hold the weight in your non-fistula arm in front of your shoulder. Keep your wrist straight.
- Smoothly raise the weight towards the ceiling until your elbow is straight.
- Slowly lower the weight back down to the shoulder
- Only do this exercise with your non-fistula arm (the arm that is not connected to the dialysis machine) whilst on dialysis.
- Repeat 8 to 12 times.

#### 4. Punching forwards



- Hold the weight in your non-fistula arm in front of your shoulder.
- Smoothly push the weight in front of you until your elbow is nearly straight.
- Slowly return the weight back to the starting position.
- **Only do this exercise with your non-fistula arm** (the arm that is not connected to the dialysis machine) whilst on dialysis.
- Repeat 8 to 10 times with each arm.

#### 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 Road, 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](http://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 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](http://www.nhs.uk)

**Leaflet number: 3680/VER2**

Date published: January 2018

Review date: January 2021

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A list of sources is available on request