Hydrotherapy for your back – exercise sheet

This leaflet gives you instructions for exercises in the hydrotherapy pool, as your physiotherapist showed you. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak to the physiotherapist caring for you.

Exercise in water has positive effects in the management of pain, improving physical function, and health-related quality of life for people with back pain.

Walking

Starting position
Hold a bat in each hand, with the face of the bat positioned as shown in picture 1.

Action
Walk forwards.

Progress
Increase the speed of the movement.

Use a float in front of your tummy and with two flippers on as shown in picture 2.

Repeat
Clinician recommendation:
Spinal flexion

**Starting position**
Hold the rail, and try to move your feet as far up the wall as possible, towards your hands.

**Action**
Hold the position for 15 seconds, to stretch the muscles beside your spine, in your buttocks and legs.

**Progress**
Try to move your feet higher up the wall. Hold for 30-45 seconds if you can.

**Repeat**
Clinic recommendation:

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Spinal extension

**Starting position**
Hold the rail, stand with your feet away from the wall and arch your spine backwards.

**Action**
Maintain the position for up 15 seconds if you can.

**Progress**
Hold for 30-45 seconds if you can.

**Repeat**
Clinic recommendation:

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Spinal side flexion

**Starting position**
Stand with a small gap between your feet. Hold a noodle float in each hand.

**Action**
Side bend to your right, and then to your left, keeping the elbows quite straight as you move.

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### Spinal rotation

**Starting position**
Stand with a small gap between your feet. Hold a bat with both hands and place it just below the surface of the water.

**Action**
Rotate your body to the right, and then to your left.

**Progress**
Do the exercise with the edge of the bat pointing upwards and with the bat submerged in the water, as shown in picture 3.

*Bring your feet closer together.*

*Increase the speed of the movement.*

**Repeat**
Clinician recommendation:

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**Progress**
Do the exercise in a deeper section of the pool.

*Bring your feet closer together.*

*Increase the speed of the movement.*

**Repeat**
Clinician recommendation:
Push-pull with float

Starting position
Stand with one leg in front and one leg behind, holding an exercise float close to your body.

Action
Push the float away from you, then pull it back towards you.

Progress
Use a larger exercise float.

Bring your feet closer together.

Increase the speed of the movement.

Repeat
Clinician recommendation:

Noodle float push down

Starting position
Stand with one leg in front of the other, and hold a noodle float with both hands.

Action
Push the noodle float down into the water, and then control the float as it comes up again.

Continued on the next page
**Thigh tucks**

**Starting position**  
Hold the rail at the side of the pool with both hands. Put tops of your feet on the lower inside edge of a ring float, and your body in a straight position.

**Action**  
Bend your hips to move your thighs towards your tummy.

**Progress**  
Use an inflatable float.

Increase the speed of the movement.

**Repeat**  
Clinician recommendation:

**Progress**  
Do the exercise in a deeper part of the pool

Use two noodle floats, as shown in picture 4.

Bring your feet closer together.

Increase the speed of the movement.

**Repeat**  
Clinician recommendation:

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**Trunk rotations in corner**

**Starting position**  
Position yourself in the corner of the pool, holding onto the rails either side of you, with your knees bent.

**Action**  
Rotate the lower part of your body and legs to your right and then to your left.

Continued on next page
Noodle float sitting to noodle float lying (advanced exercise)

Starting position
Sit on one or two noodle floats, depending on how much buoyancy support you need. Your feet should not be touching the floor of the pool.

Action
Pass the noodle floats forwards from underneath your legs, so that you come to the end position, on your front and holding both noodle floats, as shown in picture 5.

Progress
Increase the speed of the movement

Repeat
Clinician recommendation:
Squats with float

Starting position
Stand with hip-width gap between your feet, and holding a float.

Action
Squat downwards pushing the float down into the water. Then pull upwards with the float as you come back to a standing position.

Progress
Reduce the size of the gap between your feet.

Use a larger float.

Increase the speed of the movement.

Do the exercise in a deeper part of the pool.

Repeat
Clinician recommendation:

Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about your hydrotherapy appointment, please contact the physiotherapy department where your appointment is booked, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm:
Guy's Hospital, t: 020 7188 5104
St Thomas' Hospital, t: 020 7188 5094 or t: 020 7188 5083

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit w: 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, Monday to Friday, 9am-5pm

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