Tibia intramedullary nail operation – physiotherapy advice

This leaflet gives you advice about recovering after your operation. It also explains exercises you should do each day, things to look out for and some general advice. If you have any questions or concerns, please speak with the staff caring for you.

Your physiotherapist

For you to be discharged safely from hospital following your operation, you will be seen by a physiotherapist after your surgery. They will show you exercises to strengthen your leg and to prevent stiffness or loss in range of movement.

Your physiotherapist will provide you with a walking aid (for example, a cane or frame) and teach you how to walk safely with it. You will probably be able to put as much weight on your operated leg as is comfortable, unless your surgeon or physiotherapist tell you not to. If you have stairs at home, your physiotherapist can instruct you on how to manage them using crutches.

General advice

- **Pain.** You may experience some pain in your leg after your surgery. You should take your pain relief on a regular basis to help your recovery. If the medication provided is not managing your pain, please speak to your nurse or doctor.
- **Swelling.** To reduce swelling in your operated leg you should rest with your leg elevated for an hour at a time at regular times through the day. Use pillows or cushions to make sure your foot is raised above your knee, and your knee is above your hip. When resting your leg, make sure that the knee is in a straight position. Do not put pillows under your knee to make it more comfortable, as this can cause you difficulties straightening the leg.
- **Washing/dressing.** When you are bathing or showering, you must keep your leg dry and make sure you follow your advised weight bearing status. Usually, patients prefer a strip/bowl wash in the early days after surgery. An occupational therapist may give you advice and equipment to help you with these tasks if required.
- **Getting out and about.** Take care when going outside your home, and be aware of uneven surfaces when walking with your walking aid. If you need to carry anything light, for example, a water bottle, we advise you wear a rucksack over both shoulders. Carrying heavy items is not recommended. If your hands become uncomfortable from walking with crutches, try using gloves, such as cycling or weight-lifting gloves.
- **Activity.** You may find that your operated leg is stiffer and feels weaker than before the operation, which is normal. The exercise programme below is designed to help with this. It is important that you start these exercises as soon as you have been shown how to do them, to prevent any other problems occurring.
Following discharge from hospital
Contact your GP or local Emergency Department (A&E) if you experience:
- persistent pain
- swelling, oozing or redness around the wound
- fever or a high temperature (38°C (100.4°F) or above)
- calf pain or major swelling.

Daily exercise programme
Aim to complete this exercise program every day, twice daily.

Bed exercises
  1. Ankle alphabet movements
     - Sit in bed with your legs straight and your back supported.
     - Write out the alphabet with your foot, allowing your ankle to move through the movements of all the letters A to Z. All the movements should come from your ankle joint.

Complete this exercise ____ times. Complete ____ sets.

Additional comments __________________________
2. **Active assisted toe up with towel**
   - Sit in bed with your legs straight and your back supported.
   - Loop a long towel/cloth around the front of your foot.
   - Hold the two ends with your hands.
   - Keeping you knee straight, try to bring your toes up towards your face. Assist the movement by pulling the ends of the towel/cloth.
   - Hold this position for 30 seconds and then release and relax.

![Image of towel assistance](image)

Complete this exercise ____ times. Complete ____ sets.

Additional comments __________________________________________________

3. **Straight leg raise**
   - Sit in bed with your legs straight and your back supported.
   - Point your toes up to the ceiling, tighten your thigh muscles of your operated leg and press the back of your knee down into the bed.
   - Keep the knee straight and lift your leg up off the bed (clearing approx 30cm).
   - Hold for five seconds and then relax for five seconds.

![Image of straight leg raise](image)

Complete this exercise ____ times. Complete ____ sets.

Additional comments __________________________________________________
Chair exercises

1. Knee bending
   - Sit upright in a chair, with both feet flat on the floor.
   - With the operated leg, slide your foot underneath the chair, keeping your toes on the floor, trying to bend your knee as much as possible, within your pain limits.
   - Hold this bent position for 10 seconds and then slowly return your leg to a comfortable position. Relax between repetitions.

2. Knee extension
   - Sit in a chair, with your knees at 90 degrees, and with both feet on the floor.
   - With the operated leg, tighten the muscles in your thigh, lift your toes and straighten your leg as much as possible.
   - Hold this straight position for five seconds and then slowly lower back down to the floor.
   - Relax between repetitions.

Complete this exercise ____ times.
Complete ____ sets.
Additional comments
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Complete this exercise ____ times.
Complete ____ sets.
Additional comments
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Contact us
If you have any questions or concerns about lower limb injury or operation, please contact George Perkins Ward, t: 020 7188 2670, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and ask to speak to the nurse in charge.

Outside of these hours, if you have any concerns, please contact your GP or go to your nearest Emergency Department.

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, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm

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 3514 (complaints)  e: complaints2@gstt.nhs.uk
t: 020 7188 8801 (PALS)  e: pals@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