

Seated exercise programme

Advice for in-patients

Name:

Produced in collaboration with



Active Hospital
Project

Who is this booklet for?

This booklet contains general advice and exercises to guide you to become more active whilst you are in hospital.

Having a stay in hospital may leave you feeling weaker than usual and everyday tasks may feel very challenging and tiring. Moving more whilst you're in hospital can help you to maintain your independence and reduce the risk of developing further medical problems.

This booklet details a number of exercises that can be carried out when you are sitting on a chair. There are exercises to work on stamina, flexibility and strength, as well as guidance on how to make the exercises more challenging. It's also beneficial to continue doing these exercises when you leave hospital.



Why not ask your friends or relatives to help you when they come to visit?

There is a short video that accompanies this exercise booklet which can be found at www.ouh.nhs.uk/services/departments/acute-emergency/geratology

If you are interested in more exercises for older people, you might want to look at the 'Generation Games' seated exercise video on YouTube:

www.generationgames.org.uk – Exercise at home for the over 50s

It may be that you weren't particularly active before you came into hospital. Many people find that being in hospital prompts them to look again at the role of physical activity in their day-to-day routine. Remember, it's never too late to increase the amount you do.

With small increases in activity, people can very quickly improve their fitness, making it easier to participate in activities that are important to them. Increasing the amount of exercise you do will bring a range of benefits, not only to your general health. You are also likely to experience:

- improved sleep
- a more steady, healthy weight
- fewer problems with stress.

Setting goals can be a helpful way of monitoring your progression and making sure the exercises are having the desired effect. These goals should be personal to you, and we would encourage you to discuss them with your therapist. If you are interested in exploring this further, we can provide you with a goal-setting booklet that helps guide you through the process.

How to use this booklet

You will see the following symbols throughout the booklet:



Step by step instructions explaining how to perform the exercise



The reason the exercise is important for you



Top tips

How much should I do?

Ideally you should practise these exercises every day. You may prefer to practise in smaller activity chunks, for example arm exercises in one session and leg exercises in the next.

How do I know when to stop exercising?

If you are not used to being physically active, it is normal to experience some muscle soreness after doing a new activity. This discomfort will reduce as you become more accustomed to the activity. Worsening symptoms may be due to increasing activity too quickly; try reducing activity levels a little and then gradually increase them again more slowly.

Dizziness, sickness or excessive tiredness are signals to stop exercising and wait for symptoms to settle. Warning signs to seek urgent medical attention include blacking out, chest pain, or excessive shortness of breath.



The most important thing is to start small and build up gradually. During the first 2-3 months of increasing your physical activity it may be helpful to be active with other people.

Seated tummy exercise



Move your bottom forwards a small distance from the back of the chair. Your feet should be flat on the floor, hip width apart.

Sit up tall from your lower back, lifting your chest up.

In this position try also pulling your tummy button in towards your spine – this engages your abdominal muscles.

Let them relax and try again, but this time pulling in only a small amount. You should try and achieve this small contraction when practising the exercises.



This helps strengthen your body and can lead to improvements in your posture.

Leg marches



Sit up, away from the back of the chair.

Holding onto the sides of the chair, start marching your legs at an even and controlled pace.

Keep going for up to 2 minutes.

Need more?

✓ Add in an arm swing.



You might find this exercise starts to make you feel a bit warmer and breathe a little heavier. You should still be able to hold a conversation.



This helps to strengthen the muscles on the front of your hip. These are important for lifting your legs, for example when climbing stairs. Keeping moving for a couple of minutes will also help improve your circulation and stamina.

Ankle flexibility



Place both feet flat on the floor.

Keeping your heels on the floor, lift your toes as high as you can. Lower them back to the floor, then lift both heels.

Continue alternating between toes and heels, at a steady and even pace. Work through the full range of movement of your ankle.

Do 2 sets of 10.



This helps to improve flexibility of your ankle, which is helpful when getting up from a chair and going up and down stairs. It is also good for the circulation in your legs.

Heel taps



Sitting up towards the front of the chair, step your foot forwards to tap your heel on the floor. Return to the start position then do the same with the other foot.

Continue, alternating your feet at an even pace.

Do 2 sets of 10 with each leg.

Too much?

✓ Reduce the number of repetitions and build back up gradually.

Need more?

✓ Increase the number of repetitions.

✓ Add in an arm curl (bending your elbow and bringing your hand up towards your shoulder) as you step your foot forwards.



This helps to strengthen the muscles on the front of your thigh. These are the powerful muscles that help when you get up from the chair and provide strength to your knees when you're walking. Keeping moving for a couple of minutes will also help improve your circulation and stamina.

Leg side taps



Sit tall towards the front of the chair. Holding onto the sides of the chair, lift one leg out to the side, touching your toe to the floor. Bring it back into the middle, then repeat with the other leg.

Remember to keep your tummy muscles switched on!

Do 10 taps to each side.

Need more?

✓ Increase the number of side taps until you can do 3 sets of 10.



This helps to strengthen the muscles on the side of your hip. These muscles are important when you're walking, but also when you move your leg sideways, for example when getting in and out of the car.

Shoulder rolls



Sit tall in your chair. Shrug both shoulders up towards your ears, then move them backwards, squeezing your shoulder blades together. Then relax them down again.

Make your shoulder movements as big as you can.

Repeat 5 times.



This helps to increase flexibility in your shoulders, which can help with things like washing your hair. This is also great for relieving tension and discomfort in your upper back and neck.

Upper arm strength



Keeping your elbows in by your side, lift one hand up towards your shoulder. Slowly lower your hand back down again.

Do 10 with each arm.

Need more?

- ✓ Increase the number of repetitions.
- ✓ Hold a small weight, such as a small bottle of water.



This helps to strengthen the muscles at the front of your upper arm (biceps), which is useful when carrying heavy objects.

Pillow press



Hold a pillow in both hands, close to your chest. Push the pillow up into the air until your elbows are straight, but not locked. Lift it as high as you can.

Repeat 10 times.

Need more?

- ✓ Increase the number of repetitions.
- ✓ Swap the pillow for a small weight.



This helps to strengthen the muscles at the front of your shoulder and chest. These muscles are important when reaching up, for example to get something from a high shelf.

Thigh strength



Lift one foot up in front of you, until your knee is straight. Keep your toes pointing upwards.

Hold for a count of 5, then slowly lower your foot back to the ground.

Do 10 with each leg.

Too hard?

- ✓ Reduce the length of time holding the position.
- ✓ Reduce the number of repetitions, then build back up gradually.

Need more?

- ✓ Increase to 3 sets of 10.
- ✓ Add a small ankle weight, then build up the number of repetitions.



This helps to strengthen the muscles on the front of your thigh. These are the powerful muscles you use to get up from a chair and provide strength to your knees when you're walking.

Reaching across



Sit up tall, towards the front of the chair. Reach your right arm across your body, then stretch across a few inches further.

Return to the start position and repeat with the other arm.

Do 5 in each direction.

Feeling unsteady?

- ✓ Hold on to the chair with your other hand to improve your stability.



This helps to improve flexibility in your upper back, making it easier when you're reaching for things.

Sit to stand



Move towards the front of the chair. Your feet should be flat on the floor, slightly behind your knees.

Bring your upper chest forward and, with your hands on the sides of the chair, push up through your feet and hands into a standing position.

Repeat 5 times.

Not quite there yet?

- ✓ Start by lifting your bottom just a small distance, pushing through your arms.
- ✓ Make it easier by starting in a higher seat.

Need more?

- ✓ Rely less on your arms, using the strength in your legs more.
- ✓ Do more repetitions.



This helps to improve strength in your legs and hips. This makes it easier to get up from a chair.



Try practising this exercise once every hour.

Produced as part of the Active Hospital Pilot at Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, aiming to improve levels of activity in hospitals.

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If you need an interpreter or would like this information leaflet in another format, such as Easy Read, large print, Braille, audio, electronically or another language, please speak to the department where you are being seen. You will find their contact details on your appointment letter.

Making a difference across our hospitals

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