

# Coping with Everyday Life with a Circular Frame

This leaflet contains practical tips and suggestions from other patients who have had a circular frame or external fixation device on their leg.

## Try to lead as normal a life as possible

Seeing friends and family, getting out and doing things you enjoy are all important for your well-being during your treatment.

You may need to think carefully about what you **can** do and plan ahead when visiting places, for example, find out where the disabled access is, if the toilets are accessible and look up transport to get you there and back.

You could think about hiring a wheelchair if you get very tired.

## Fatigue

It takes a lot more effort to get around with a frame and with a walking aid. You will need to plan your day and week thinking about what is most important and when you have the most energy or are the most tired. Making lists may help you to plan and prioritise your day.

You may find it easier to sit to do household tasks such as preparing meals, getting dressed or sorting laundry. Online shopping and home delivery and prepared meals or ingredients can be helpful.

You could think about hiring a wheelchair if you find walking very tiring but want to visit shops and other facilities or events.

More information can be found in the **Energy Conservation Following Trauma** leaflet or ask your occupational therapist.

## Carrying items

Using an over the shoulder or cross body bag or a rucksack might be useful for carrying a drink bottle and other items.

Some people attach a shopping bag onto walking frame handles.

A thermos flask is useful for hot drinks or soups and can be placed in a bag to transport.

A kitchen trolley may be useful to move whole meals from your kitchen work surface to a table.

## Bathing

It is fine to shower your limb with the frame if none of your pin sites are infected. Don't submerge the frame in water and avoid perfumed soaps or shower gels (baby soaps and shampoos are best). You need to thoroughly dry your frame with a fresh towel and clean all your pin-sites after every shower.

Most people find that they need to sit to shower. If your shower is large enough you could fit a shower chair. If you have a bath you can sit over the bath using a bath board but you need to be careful that the frame doesn't damage the bath enamel. Some people put a towel and/or a non-slip bath mat over the surface of the bath to protect it from damage.

## Sleeping

You will need extra pillows to position your leg and may like to use a pillow or a foam wedge to stop your other leg rubbing against the frame. Some people use a bed cradle or frame and a mattress protector or a sheepskin to protect their sheets and mattress from the frame. A loosely filled bean bag is very good as it moulds to the shape of your body and the frame.

## Clothing

You may need to adapt the clothes you wear to fit over the rings of the frame. Some tracksuits have zips or poppers on the outer legs which can fit over the frame. You may find you need a size larger. Some patients prefer to wear shorts or skirts. Other patients adapt their trousers by adding extra material or Velcro fasteners to the outer edge of the trouser leg.

For more information ask your occupational therapist.

## Sex

Having a frame should not stop you having normal relationships. You may want to cover the frame to protect your partner's skin and you may also need to consider different positions depending on what you feel able to manage and the type of frame and rings that you have.

## Returning to driving

Whether you can return to driving depends on your frame, your strength and the amount you can move the rest of your leg.

The type and make of your car and the space within the foot well and around the pedals will also make a difference. Some people can drive automatic cars but not manual. Please discuss driving with your consultant and your treating team.

You will also need to inform the DVLA and your insurance company.

You should be able to get into a car as a passenger and may find the front passenger seat more comfortable and easier to get into.

## Swimming and hydrotherapy

Hydrotherapy is fine if all your pin-sites are healthy. You must shower before entering the pool and clean all pin sites afterwards.

You must avoid swimming in public pools, in the sea or in rivers or lakes, as any dirt or sand will increase your risk of infection.

## Going on holiday

Many people find it easier to go on holiday within the UK while they are having treatment.

You will need to think about how travelling could affect you. Ask yourself if you will be able to sit comfortably and if you can cope with the time the journey will take.

If you want to fly, you will need to discuss this with your consultant or clinical nurse specialist. You will also need to think about how you will access medical services if you need them while you are away and how to fit your trip around your clinic appointments. You will need to take out appropriate travel insurance.

Do not sunbathe as the metal of the frame can conduct the heat and get hot and your skin may be more vulnerable to the sun if it has been injured in the past.

## Returning to work

Returning to work depends on the type of work you do and the duties involved. Some people can easily adapt their work duties, hours and environment and can manage the journey to their workplace without too many problems.

Others, for example those working in the food industry, may face restrictions due to requirements such as health and safety laws.

Returning to work should be discussed with your employer and occupational health, if applicable. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) or a Disability Employment Adviser (DEA) based in a Job Centre can also give you information and support.

## Useful sources of information

**Some of the websites below contain interesting or useful information from other patients. Please check with your treating team before following any advice from these or other sources, as everyone is different.**

The website [www.llizarov.org](http://www.llizarov.org) is hosted by a man who had Ilizarov frame treatment and has suggestions and tips based on his experience of treatment.

Easy Adaptive Wear [www.easyadaptivewear.com/Adaptive-Underwear-s/1819.htm](http://www.easyadaptivewear.com/Adaptive-Underwear-s/1819.htm) sells underwear with side opening Velcro tabs or poppers for easy wear.

## Contact us

If you have any questions or concerns about your rehabilitation or how you are managing at home, please contact the trauma and orthopaedic therapy team on 020 8725 0985 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 5pm).

**For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit [www.stgeorges.nhs.uk](http://www.stgeorges.nhs.uk)**

## Additional services

### Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you on-the-spot advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or the care you have received. You can visit the PALS office between 9.30am and 4.30pm, Monday to Friday in the main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough wings (near the lift foyer).

**Tel:** 020 8725 2453 **Email:** [pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk](mailto:pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk)

### NHS Choices

NHS Choices provides online information and guidance on all aspects of health and healthcare, to help you make decisions about your health.

**Web:** [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)

### NHS 111

You can call 111 when you need medical help fast but it's not a 999 emergency. NHS 111 is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Calls are free from landlines and mobile phones.

**Tel:** 111

### AccessAble

You can download accessibility guides for all our services by searching 'St George's Hospital' on the AccessAble website ([www.accessable.co.uk](http://www.accessable.co.uk)).

The guides are designed to ensure everyone – including those with accessibility needs – can access our hospital and community sites with confidence.



**Reference:** THE\_CFR\_03 **Published:** March 2022 **Review date:** March 2024