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Physical Activity in Hospital Following a Stem Cell Transplant

This leaflet describes activities that you can try whilst you are in hospital following a stem cell transplant.

If you are unsure of how to do any of these or have any further questions, please speak to a member of the team caring for you.

Staying in bed for too long can lead to your muscles becoming weaker. This can make it hard for you to get around and carry out your daily activities.

After undergoing a stem cell transplant, you may experience side effects that make it more difficult to be active.

Being active can help your wellbeing both physically and mentally and can help you to manage symptoms such as tiredness (fatigue) and muscle weakness or stiffness.

Here are some simple steps that can help you maintain your strength.

Wash and dress yourself if you are able.

Sit out of bed for meals.

Try to practise some of the exercises described here.

How hard should I push myself?

Monitoring how the activity feels when you are doing it is helpful to track your progress and helps you to work at the right intensity. The scale below is a 'Rate of Perceived Exertion'. The number that you record indicates the intensity or how hard you feel you are working. You may find that on some days activities may feel more difficult than on other days, this scale will help you to monitor your tiredness and how hard to push yourself.

Rating of perceived exertion (Modified Borg Scale)	
0	Rest
1	Really easy
2	Easy
3	Moderate
4	Somewhat hard
5	Hard
6	
7	Really hard
8	
9	Really, really hard
10	Maximal intensity

In general we would recommend you working at a level of 3.

Spread the exercises throughout the day and allow yourself to rest in between sets of each exercise.

Setting a goal

Setting goals can boost our confidence and help us start to do more of the things we enjoy. It is best to start small, break down the goal into smaller steps if that helps and make sure the goal is achievable for you.

Examples include sitting in your chair for an hour, walking around your room five times, being able to get yourself washed and dressed into your own clothes in the morning. Please set your goals here.

Managing energy levels

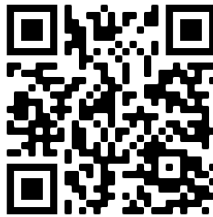
Fatigue is a common side effect following a stem cell transplant. There is evidence that physical activity can help reduce the experience of fatigue. To do this, it's best to find a good balance of being active and having a rest and trying to build up your level of activity a little bit at a time rather than starting with an intensive programme. Try to do activities throughout the day rather than all at once. Be careful not to overdo it on 'good days'.

Exercises

Below are examples of exercises you might find helpful. You may have days when you are feeling more tired or not well enough to exercise. On these days we advise that you still sit out of bed for each meal and try some of the gentle exercises at the start of the programme below, which will help with circulation and general mobility.

Try to maintain a good posture whilst doing all your exercises. If you are feeling unwell or experience pain, stop that exercise, rest and contact a member of the team on the ward.

You may find it helpful to follow an exercise video that demonstrates the exercises described below. Please follow the link below to access the video.



<https://youtu.be/MI16eps29nl>

Suggested exercises

1. Ankle pumps



Point your toes down towards the floor and then back up towards the ceiling.

Repeat this movement ____ times with each leg.

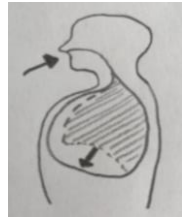
2. Muscle squeezes



Lying or sitting upright in bed with your legs straight. Tighten your thigh muscles and push your legs down flat onto the bed. Hold for five seconds and then relax. Clench your buttocks and hold for five seconds, then relax.

Repeat _____ times with each leg.

3. Deep breathing exercises



Sitting upright with your arms and shoulders relaxed, breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, feel your lungs filling with air. Hold the breath in for two seconds and then slowly breathe out through your mouth.

Repeat four times.

4. Arm stretches



Keeping your arms straight, slowly lift both arms out to the side and above your head, slowly lower back down.

Repeat _____ times.

Repeat lifting forwards and up above your head.

Repeat _____ times.

To make this easier:

Complete the exercise in a seated position (first picture).

To make this harder:

Hold a weight in each hand whilst doing the exercises.

5. Thigh strengthener



Sit upright in a chair, with your knees bent and feet firmly on the floor. Slowly straighten one leg out in front of you and pull your toes up towards you.

Hold your knee straight for three seconds then slowly lower it back down.

Repeat _____ times on each leg.

To make this harder:

Hold your leg straight for a longer period and increase the number of repetitions you do.

Repeat the exercise with an ankle weight (second picture).

6. Walking

Walk around your room. Your medical and nursing team will advise when you are allowed to leave your room, please wear a face mask when you do.

Please use your walking aid to support you (where appropriate).

To make this easier:

March on the spot, holding onto a stable surface.

Seated marching. Sitting down, lift each leg alternatively.

To make this harder:

Hold a weight in each hand whilst you are walking.

7. Sit to stand



Sitting on a sturdy chair, stand up straight from the chair, then slowly sit back down.

Repeat _____ times.

To make this easier:

Use your arms to help you push up.

Sit on a higher chair whilst doing the exercise.

To make this harder:

Don't use your arms to help you stand, cross them over your chest whilst you complete the exercise.

Hold a weight in each hand whilst you stand and sit down.



8. Bike / Pedals



If using the ward exercise bike, ensure the seat is at the correct height and secured in position.

If using the pedals, position them as shown above.

Start with a low resistance to warm up, then increase the resistance to meet your desired level of exertion (page 2).

Aim to cycle for ____ minutes.

If you have any questions about these exercises or need any assistance please ask your doctors or nurses to contact the physiotherapy team who will get in touch to support you and answer your questions.

Continuing to be active

On discharge from hospital, it is important to continue to gently build up your activity levels to optimise your recovery. For further information and advice see:

The Anthony Nolan Website to access the following booklet - Life after transplant: An essential guide to diet and physical activity. Anthony Nolan



The Macmillan website for 'Move More' resources



For additional resources and local exercise opportunities please also visit the St George's Macmillan information centre for further details.

For more information leaflets on conditions, procedures, treatments and services offered at our hospitals, please visit www.stgeorges.nhs.uk

Activity Diary

Record the activity you can do each day so you and your team can see how you are progressing

Date	Exercises (e.g. 1, 4, 5 or 'all')	Time spent	Comments

Additional services

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

PALS can offer you advice and information when you have comments or concerns about our services or care. You can contact the PALS team on the advisory telephone line Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday from 2pm to 5pm.

A Walk-in service is available:

Monday, Tuesday and Thursday between 10am and 4pm

Friday between 10am and 2pm.

Please contact PALS in advance to check if there are any changes to opening times.

The Walk-in and Advisory telephone services are closed on Wednesdays.

PALS is based within the hospital in the ground floor main corridor between Grosvenor and Lanesborough Wing.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** 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

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).

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



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