

Keeping Active in Hospital

Physiotherapy Advice for Children over five years old

This leaflet provides information for paediatric oncology patients to support physical activity during their inpatient stay and beyond.

Why is it Important for your child to Stay Active?

The treatment of cancer can be physically demanding and side effects include pain, fatigue, muscle weakness and muscle tightness. Some medications can also cause side effects which can affect the nerves, leading to difficulties in the hands and feet and impacting function.

Remaining active during treatment can help with:

- Improving physical function and energy levels to take part in daily activities
- Improving confidence and well-being
- Maintaining a healthy weight
- Maintaining bone density and lung health
- Relieving constipation
- Improving sleep patterns
- Maintaining independence and sense of normality during their treatment.



General Ideas on How to Stay Active

There are small changes that you can make to your child's routine to help them remain active, both in hospital and at home.

- Take a flight of stairs instead of the lift.
- Sit up in bed and play rather than lying down.
- Sit out in a chair during mealtimes.
- Walk to the toilet instead of using a commode or bottles when possible.
- Keep a rough timetable to structure the day, to help your child sleep at night and be awake during the day.
- Take part in sports and activities that your child enjoyed prior to diagnosis and which have been agreed by the medical team. The team will be able to advise further if there are specific restrictions to your child's movement, especially if your child has a line.

Things to consider when being active:

- Build up activity or exercise slowly into their daily routine.
- Move little and often, ensure they have appropriate time for rest.
- Make things fun and try to get siblings, relatives or friends involved.
- Exercise safely, including warm up where appropriate.
- Be aware of infections. If your child has an infection or fever, they should not exercise more than completing activities in their daily routine.



Other Activities Off the Ward

There are lots of different things you can do in the hospital that will provide you with some routine. Here are some things we can offer but it will be important to check with the nurse or doctors that your blood counts allow you to leave the ward.

- Playroom – open from **11am to 12 midday** and **2pm to 4pm** every day. Check with the play team and nurses if your child can visit; they might be able to organise rainbow time if they are unable to attend with other children.
- School - discuss with the school team if they can attend or if the team is able to drop you some activities to keep busy during the day.
- Fishpond – there is an outdoor area located between Grosvenor and St James' wings. Try to spot the yellow, black and orange carp in the pond, some are almost ½ meter long!
- Play Garden – speak to the play team or nurses for access.
- Café - there are lots of cafes around the hospital where you can sit and have a treat with your family for a change of scenery.

Things to Look Out For

The therapy team will not routinely see every child whilst they are an inpatient but hopefully some of the information above can support you throughout your treatment.

There are a few things that would be beneficial to look out for. If you notice these things, a physiotherapist or occupational therapist can be contacted to review.

Things to monitor throughout their treatment:

- Struggling to complete tasks they used to be able to complete easily, like walking to the toilet or sitting up in bed.
- Changes in the quality of movement, such as poor balance or struggling to use their hands to play games or dress themselves.
- Increased tiredness meaning they are struggling to complete tasks and engage in activity throughout the day.
- Tightness in their ankles, meaning they are walking more on their tiptoes or finding increased pain in their calves.
- Pain in their joints which may restrict their ability to move.

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

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 wings.

Tel: 020 8725 2453 **Email:** pals@stgeorges.nhs.uk

NHS UK

The NHS 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.

