

Wearing a spinal brace during myeloma treatment

This leaflet provides information about activities you can do while wearing a spinal brace, and how to become active again once you no longer need to wear it. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to the staff member in charge of your care.

Why should I wear a spinal brace?

Your healthcare team have advised you to wear a spinal brace as part of your myeloma treatment. Bone disease is a complication of myeloma. Myeloma cells in the bone marrow can cause bones to become weaker and they can break more easily.

The brace will help control your movement and reduce the pressure on your spine while your myeloma treatment heals your bones. The brace will also help you maintain a good upright posture and may reduce pain.

Guidance for wearing your brace

Follow the recommendations from your team on when and where to wear your brace. How long you need to keep wearing your brace – in terms of weeks or months – will depend on your individual situation and how your myeloma treatment progresses.

To protect your skin and absorb perspiration, we advise you to wear the brace over a cotton T-shirt or vest. Inspect your skin daily for redness, blisters, or broken areas. If you notice any areas where your brace is rubbing, please contact the team that provided it (name and telephone number supplied below). Do not attempt to alter the brace yourself by cutting it or adding additional padding, as this may create pressure points that irritate your skin.

 The London Orthotics Company
020 8974 9989

When wearing your brace, try to avoid activities that involve excessive bending, twisting, pushing or lifting.

Exercises you can do when wearing your brace

Being active is important to prevent your muscles from becoming weaker. It is important that you stop any exercise if it causes you pain.

1. Walking

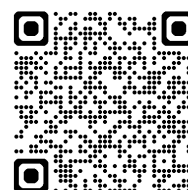


Gradually increase your walking speed, with the aim of eventually achieving a brisk pace. Start slowly and build up to walking slightly faster than normal (approximately 3 miles per hour). Your breathing should be a little deeper than usual, but you should still be able to talk to someone next to you.

You may not be able to walk for as long at this pace as you can when you're going at your normal speed, so begin with short sessions of around 5 to 10 minutes. Gradually increase this each week, aiming to end up ideally walking at this brisk pace for **30 minutes, 5 days a week**.

The NHS Active 10 app will allow you to track how much and how fast you walk.

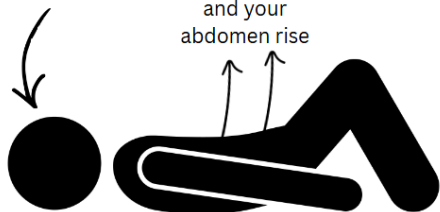
[Download Active 10 from the NHS Better Health website](#)



2. Core muscle contractions

Breathe **in**
through
your nose

Feel your lower
ribs expand
and your
abdomen rise



Lie on your back with your knees bent.

Take a breath in.

As you breathe out, try to tighten your abdominal muscles (those running from the bottom of your ribs down to your hip bones) so that you are drawing your belly button towards your back. At the same time, tighten your pelvic floor muscles (imagine you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and urine).

Breathe **out**
through
your mouth

Feel your ribs and
abdomen lower.
Tighten and brace
your abdominal and
pelvic floor muscles



Try to hold this feeling for 3 seconds, then gently relax.

Gradually build up to being able to hold this feeling for 10 seconds.

3. Gluteal (bottom) contractions

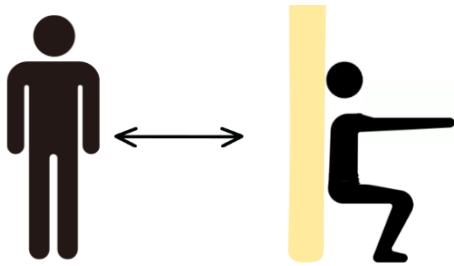
While sitting or lying down in a comfortable position, squeeze your buttocks, feeling them tighten underneath you. There are two types of gluteal contractions:



1. Hold this contraction for 10 seconds while continuing to breathe, then relax.

2. Hold and release this contraction in quick bursts, repeating this action 10 times.

4. Squats



Start standing with your shoulders relaxed, leaning against a wall.

Keep your feet pointing forward and hip-width apart.

Slowly sliding down the wall, so that you keep your back straight, bend your knees into a squat position

Then straighten your knees to return to your original standing position.

When and how to stop wearing your brace.

Your healthcare team will advise when it is appropriate to stop wearing your brace.

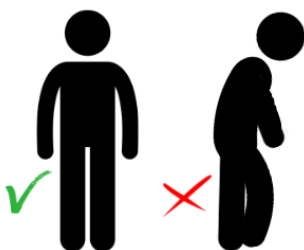
As your body will have adapted to wearing the brace over several weeks or months, we advise gradually reducing its use. Slowly start to increase the amount of time during the day that you are not wearing your brace. Begin by removing it for one-two hours at a time, twice a day. If you are comfortable after four days, gradually increase the amount of time you spend without the brace until you are no longer wearing it at all. Go at your own pace: this gradual approach helps prevent sudden strain on your back.

For the first month after stopping regular use, we would advise continuing to wear your brace when travelling by car, bus, or train.

It is normal to feel stiff and experience some aching and discomfort when you stop wearing your brace. However, if you experience sudden pain, put your brace back on and contact your healthcare team.

Looking after your back

1. Thinking about your posture



Imagine a line stretching from the top of your head to the soles of your feet, passing through the centre of your body.

Try to keep your back straight, with your hips, knees and ankles aligned with this imaginary line.

Try to avoid slumping or hunching over.

2. Posture during movement

When doing household activities, be mindful of your posture and back position. Carrying out activities while standing with your feet hip-width apart, or with one foot in front of the

other, allows you to transfer your weight from one foot to the other instead of straining your spine.

Position items on a table where possible, or squat in front of items by bending your knees but keeping your back straight, so you don't have to bend your back repeatedly to reach the floor.

3. Build up movement and physical activity gradually

4. Stop immediately if you feel new pain, dizziness, or weakness.

5. Avoid heavy lifting

Avoid lifting heavy objects that weigh more than 2kg (approximately the weight of a full kettle of water). For heavier tasks, such as food shopping, ask family or friends for help.

6. Taking care when lifting



The best way to keep your back safe when lifting is to:

Stand close to the object you want to lift.

Keep your feet apart.

Bend at the waist and knees – **do not bend your back.**

Keep the object close to your body to reduce the stress on your spine.

Avoid twisting while lifting.

A long-handled grabber tool might be helpful for picking up smaller items.

7. Avoid high impact activities such as running, jumping and contact sports.

8. Consider your risk of falls

Avoid uneven surfaces and activities that challenge your balance. Fall-proof your home by removing clutter and loose rugs.

Exercises after your brace has been removed

Once you no longer need to wear your brace, we would recommend doing daily exercises.

Gentle, safe movement helps to:

- Maintain muscle strength and mobility.
- Reduce fatigue and improve energy levels.
- Support bone health and overall well-being.

Being in a brace will have restricted your movement, so these exercises are designed to help you gently build up your muscle strength and ease any stiffness you may be feeling.

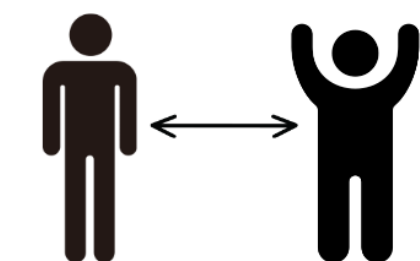
Do not push into pain. Stop immediately if you experience pain.

1. Walking

Continue to gradually increase the length of time you are able to walk during each session.

2. Back stretches

Do these stretches gently – do not force the movement or push into pain.



Stand with your back against a wall. Lift both arms in front of you and then above your head, reaching towards the ceiling. Slowly lower your arms back down to your side.



Gentle side bends.

Stand with your back against the wall and your palms touching the wall. Slowly slide one hand down the wall towards the floor – as always, do not force the movement.

Slowly return to your standing position.

Repeat for the other side.

3. Shoulder blade glides

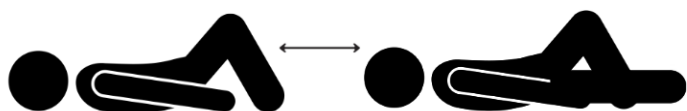


While sitting or standing, relax your shoulders so they are not raised or tense.

Focussing on the lower point of your shoulder blades, gently draw your shoulder blades together and downwards, as if pulling them towards your spine. Hold for a few seconds, then relax.

Repeat this movement.

4. Core exercises – single leg slides



Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor/bed.

Activate your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles (see the core muscle exercise to do in your brace above).

As you breath out, slowly slide one leg along the floor/bed until it is straight and resting flat.

Relax and breathe in.

As you breathe out again, activate your core muscles again and slide the leg up to meet the other one again in the starting position.

5. Core exercises – clam



Lie on your side with your hips bent to a 45 degree angle and your knees to a 90 degree angle, with your legs stacked on top of each other.

Keep your feet and ankles together throughout the exercise.

Keep your back straight and **do not** twist your spine.

Breathe in, then as you breathe out, lift the top knee up towards the ceiling, keeping your feet and ankles together.

Breathe in as you lower the knee back down.

Tips for success

- **Listen to your body** and rest when you need to.
- **Wear supportive footwear** and comfortable clothing.
- **Report any new pain or symptoms** to your healthcare team immediately.

When to seek help

Contact your GP or Myeloma team if you experience:

- Sudden or worsening back pain.
- Numbness, tingling, or weakness in legs.
- Loss of balance or frequent falls.
- Incontinence (loss of control of wee and poo).

Useful sources of information

For further information about cancer and bone health, see the St George's Hospital 'Living with and beyond cancer' webpages



Myeloma UK resources, including the [Exercises for myeloma patients Infosheet - Myeloma UK](#)



Using QR codes on a mobile phone

To use a QR code on your phone to access the resources in this leaflet please follow these steps:

1. **Open your camera app:** Most smartphones can scan QR codes directly with the camera. Open the camera like you normally would for taking a photo.
2. **Point the camera at the QR code:** Hold your phone steady and aim the camera at the QR code. Make sure the code is in the centre of the screen.
3. **Wait for a link or notification:** The phone will automatically recognise the QR code and show a notification or a link.
4. **Tap the notification:** Once you see the link, tap on it to open the website or content associated with the QR code.

The images used within this document are created on www.canva.com or are photographs and videos created by the St George's clinical teams.

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 Wing.

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.



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