



Moving Medicine

Chair-based Exercise Programme

Name.....

Introduction

Having a stay in hospital may leave you feeling somewhat weaker than usual and everyday tasks may feel very challenging and tiring. Keeping moving whilst you're in hospital can help you to improve 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 in your armchair, with the support of the healthcare team. There are exercises to work on stamina, flexibility and strength as well as guidance on how to progress the exercises, so it might be something to consider continuing when you leave hospital.



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

You might also be interested to look at the 'Generation Games' seated exercise video on YouTube. Type:

[Exercise at home for the over 50s www.generationgames.org.uk](http://www.generationgames.org.uk) into your search bar.

It may be that you weren't particularly active before you came into hospital, but now might be the time to look again at the role activity plays in your life. Remember it's never too late to increase the amount you do and feel the benefits.

Setting goals can be a helpful way of monitoring your progression and ensuring that 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 a number of 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 try to 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 and so on.

How do I know when to stop exercising?

It is normal for anyone who is not used to being physically active to experience some muscle soreness after doing a new activity and this pain will reduce as they 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 increasing 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 physical activity it is sensible to be physically 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.



? To improve strength in your trunk and improve your overall posture when sitting.

Leg marches



Sit up, away from the back of the chair.

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

Try to 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.



- ? To strengthen the muscles on the front of your hip – these are important for lifting your legs, for example when climbing stairs. Trying to keep 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. Try to work through the full range of movement at your ankle.

Do 2 sets of 10



? 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 up gradually

Need more?

- ✓ Increase the number of repetitions
- ✓ Add in an arm curl as you step your foot forwards



? 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. Trying to keep 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 arm 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



? 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 the shoulder blades together, before resting them down again.

Try to make your shoulder movements as big as you can.

Repeat 5 times.



? To increase flexibility in your shoulders to 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 elbow in by your side, lift your 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 – use something handy like a small bottle of water.



? To strengthen the muscles at the front of your upper arm (biceps), used when carrying heavier 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. Try to lift it as high as you can.

Repeat 10 times

Need more?

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



? To strengthen the muscles at the front of your shoulder and chest. These muscles are important when reaching up, eg to get something from a high shelf.

Thigh strength



Lift one foot up from the floor 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 up gradually

Need more?

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



- ? 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.

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 onto the arm of the chair with the other hand to improve your stability.



- ? To improve flexibility in your upper back to make 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 arms of the chair, push up through your feet and hands into a standing position.





Follow the pictures opposite. Practise 5 times.

Not quite there yet?

- ✓ Start by practising the push through your arms to lift your bottom a small distance up from the chair, before lowering down again.
- ✓ Make it easier by starting in a higher seat

Need more?

- ✓ Try reducing the amount of work your arms are doing
- ✓ Do more repetitions.



Try practising this exercise once every hour.

- ? To improve strength in your legs and the muscles at the back of your hips. This exercise is important to improve your ability to get up from a chair.

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

Commissioned by Public Health England and funded by Sport England.

Any comments please email:

contactus@movingmedicine.ac.uk



Produced: September 2018;
Reviewed: April 2019