Physiotherapy Department

Exercising before your liver surgery

It is extremely important to maintain and increase your exercise tolerance when able before your operation. This will help to minimise the risk of complication occurring after the operation and will aid your recovery time. All exercise no matter how small or large is beneficial.

The best activities use large muscle groups in a rhythmic manner: walking, aerobics, cycling, swimming, jogging, machines such as climbers, stationary cycles, ski machines. Choose an activity that is convenient and fun for you. There are no activities that are restricted for transplant patients.

Exercises that can easily be done at home to strengthen muscles include:
- climbing stairs
- standing up and sitting down into a chair (repeat 10–15 times, using your hands as little as possible so your legs do the work)
- lifting soup cans
- push-ups against the wall or from a counter

You should try to schedule your activity so you are doing something at least five days per week. Planning activity into your daily schedule will help you stay with it on regular basis. There is no time of day that is better for exercise, it all depends on what works for you and when you will be able to do it regularly.

It is best to start slowly and increase gradually. Start with a short duration of activity and gradually increase the time of each session. Start with a comfortable, lower level of intensity and gradually increase the exertion level as you get used to the exercise. People may have problems, such as injuries, when they do too much exercise too soon. Gradual progression will prevent those kinds of problems.

A lack of exercise and immobility before your operation can lead to muscle wastage and increase the feeling of tiredness. Staying physically active will help in relieving some of this tiredness and will help to maintain your muscle strength. The more exercise you are able to do will greatly aid your recovery and your ability to return to normal activities after your operation.

The amount of exercise that you will be able to do may vary depending on how you are feeling day to day. It is suggested that you try to achieve 20 minutes of moderate intensity exercise per day. This level of exercise should make your heart beat faster and make you feel comfortably short of breath. If you are unable to reach the 20 minutes do not worry, all exercise remains beneficial.
If you are in hospital it is very important to continue with exercise and activity, to maintain your level of fitness. It is important however, not to move onto high level activity without first discussing this with your doctor or physiotherapist.

Your exercise goal:

Basic exercises

Stand in front of a table or chair holding on to the support with both hands.

Slowly crouch keeping your back straight and heels on the floor. Stay down for approximately 20 seconds and feel the stretching in your buttocks and the front of your thighs.

Repeat 10 Times
Sitting with your arms crossed.
Stand up and then sit down slowly on a chair. (This can be made easier and more difficult by changing the height of the chair)
Repeat 10 Times

Stand straight holding on to a chair.
Bring your leg backwards keeping your knee straight. Do not lean forwards.
Repeat 10 times

Lying on your back with your arms in a T-position and knees bent towards the ceiling.
Slowly roll both your legs from side to side without touching the floor.
Repeat 10 Times
Lying on your back with knees bent and arms by your side. Tighten your stomach muscles and press the small of your back against the floor letting your bottom rise. Hold for 10 seconds - relax.
Repeat 10 Times

Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall. Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line.
Repeat 10 times

**Advanced exercises**

Sitting with your arms crossed. Stand up and then sit down slowly on a chair. (This can be made easier and more difficult by changing the height of the chair)
Repeat 10 times
Stand behind a chair and support yourself with both hands.

Slowly bend your hips and knees, trying to push your bottom back. Your knees should be in line with your toes. Do not let your knees turn in or out during the movement.

Repeat 10 times

Stand straight.

Take a step forward and bend your knees. Return to the starting position. Do not let your knees turn in or out.

Repeat 10 times

Stand facing a wall with your arms straight and hands on the wall.

Do push-ups against the wall keeping your body in a straight line.

Repeat 10 times
Lying on your back with knees bent and feet on the floor.

Lift your pelvis and lower back (gradually vertebra by vertebra) off the floor.

Hold the position. Lower down slowly returning to starting position.

Repeat 10 times

Step up on the bottom step of your stairs (if you have no aerobic step) and then back down to the starting position, with one hand on the railing for support.

Repeat 10 times

Sit with back straight holding 1-2 kg weights (can of beans) in both hands.

Lift alternately arms up and bring back down.

Repeat 8 times
Stand with feet slightly apart. Hold a can of beans or a 1kg weight in both hands.

Bend your elbows and bring them up to shoulder level. Your elbows should point slightly forwards.

Repeat 8 times

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**Privacy & Dignity**

Same sex bays and bathrooms are offered in all wards except critical care and theatre recovery areas where the use of high-tech equipment and/or specialist one to one care is required.

We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site.
For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

**Other formats:**

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

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**Document history**

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