Exercise and Activity While in the Hospital

Staying active while in the hospital is important to your health and well being. To know what activities are best for you at this time, talk with your doctors, nurses, and physical therapists. Find out what exercises are best suited to your current condition and treatments. Learn about any restrictions that you may need to follow.

Exercise and being up and out of bed can help to maintain your muscle tone and improve your sense of balance and coordination. It can help keep your heart in shape, improve appetite and relieve constipation.

When you exercise - whether in or out of bed - you should feel no pain, breathe normally, and wear socks to protect your heels. While exercising, STOP at once and let your nurse know if you:

- feel short of breath
- feel dizzy
- have an upset stomach
- have excess sweating
- have pain

Exercising While in Bed

- **Ankle Pumps**
  Point your toes and foot downward. Bring your foot back up in a pumping motion. This is the same motion you use when pumping the brakes of your car. Repeat up to 10 times on each ankle. Repeat another set, up to 10, on each ankle. Do less if you tire easily, or if you and your team decide on less. While exercising, EXHALE during the exertional part of the movement.
- **Knee Extensions**
  Place a pillow or rolled up towel cross-wise beneath your knees. Your heels should touch the bed. Next, straighten one knee and then relax it. Do the same for the other knee. Breathe out as you straighten your leg; breathe in as you relax it. Be sure your knee is resting on the pillow at all times. You do not need to lift it off the pillow.

- **Hip Abduction**
  Slide one of your legs away from the other leg, keeping the other one still. Then slide it back in place. Do the same with the other leg.

- **Heel Slides**
  Slide your heel up towards your bottom and then slide your heel back down until your leg is straight. Repeat with the other leg.

- **Bridging**
  Lie on your back with your knees bent. Tighten your bottom and lift it off of the bed. If you are unable to lift your bottom off of the bed, simply tighten the buttocks.

**Exercising While Sitting in a Chair**

- **Marching**
  Start by sitting straight up in the chair with head and shoulders back and your feet planted squarely on the floor. One by one, lift your foot off the floor in a marching fashion – right, left, right, left. Put your foot down rather than letting it drop to the floor.
- **Thigh Squeezes**
  Place a pillow between your knees and squeeze your thighs together. Hold for 5 seconds and relax. This strengthens your inner thighs. To work on the outer thighs, remove the pillow and place your hands on the outside of each thigh. Push against them. Again, hold for 5 seconds and relax.

- **Heel Raises**
  Start with your feet flat on the ground. Lift your heels up until you go up on your toes. Slowly bring your feet back down to the ground. This helps to strengthen your calf muscles in your lower legs.

- **Toe Raises**
  This time lift your toes off the floor and point them to the ceiling. Relax and lower them to the floor.

- **Knee Extensions**
  Sitting upright in a chair, raise your lower leg until it is straight (horizontal). Slowly lower the leg all the way to the floor. Repeat with the other leg.

**Exercising While Standing**

- **Marching**
  Using a table or chair for support, march in place. March for 30 seconds and then take a standing rest or sit if needed. Then, march in place for another 30 seconds.

- **Walking**
  Walk around your room or in the hallways if you wish.

Now that you know the exercises, let’s start with a plan. As you begin, you may wish to change your plan. That’s OK, but remember to keep moving. Doing whatever you can to keep active is important to your recovery.
# My Exercise Plan While in the Hospital

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Your health care team may have given you this information as part of your care. If so, please use it and call if you have any questions. If this information was not given to you as part of your care, please check with your doctor. This is not medical advice. This is not to be used for diagnosis or treatment of any medical condition. Because each person's health needs are different, you should talk with your doctor or others on your health care team when using this information. If you have an emergency, please call 911. Copyright ©10/2015. University of Wisconsin Hospitals and Clinics Authority. All rights reserved. Produced by the Department of Nursing. HF#5627.