

Patient information

Physiotherapy following Critical Care

Introduction

You have been in critical care as a result of a serious injury or illness. Recovery from this can often be a slow process, sometimes taking up to 12 to 18 months before you feel able to return to a normal lifestyle.

Returning to ward

Returning to the ward is the first big step to being discharged home and may at first seem quite daunting. However the decision to discharge you from critical care will be made only when the whole multidisciplinary team feel you are ready.

The ward environment will seem very different to that of critical care. Differences you may notice are:

- Fewer nurses
- More patients
- Different day to day routine
- Change in visiting hours

One very important thing at this stage is to remember **not to worry**.

Although there are fewer nurses on the ward you will still be seen by many members of the multidisciplinary team.

You may also see a social worker who, if needed will help plan for your discharge home.

Once discharged from critical care you will be followed up by the critical care follow-up nurse who can support you with any concerns or worries that you may have. They will also stay in contact with you regularly when you are discharged from hospital.

Physiotherapy

During your stay on critical care you will have started a programme of rehabilitation with the physiotherapist, aimed at regaining your strength and then getting you back on your feet.

There may be a different physiotherapist working on your ward, however they will continue to monitor your respiratory system and help you with any ongoing breathing problems. They will also continue the rehabilitation to help you regain independence and return home as soon as you are able.

Following a stay on critical care it is very common to feel increasingly tired even doing the slightest activity. In some people this tiredness lasts several weeks, however this should gradually improve as you get stronger.

It is estimated that you can lose up to 2% of muscle strength per day spent on critical care and your joints may become stiff and achy.

The exercise programme provided by your physiotherapist will help with this as well as increasing your strength.

You will find that the physiotherapy sessions may vary in length and content depending on your level of fatigue on the day. Pacing yourself is very important.

As well as the physical exercises, your physiotherapist can offer advice regarding returning to normal activities and ways of adapting tasks to make them more manageable at the start.

Remember, rehabilitation is a marathon not a sprint!

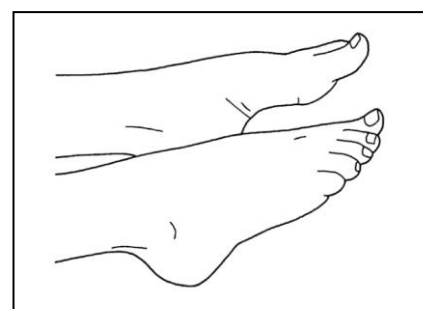
Exercises

Circulation exercises

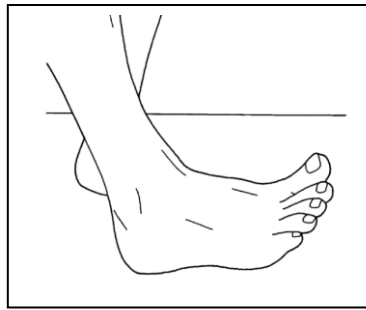
As you are not as mobile as normal, it is important that the blood is kept pumping right around the body. Circulation exercises not only get the blood pumping down to your toes but can also help prevent clots from forming, (you will probably already be wearing special stockings which are also designed to help prevent blood clots).

Ankle pumps

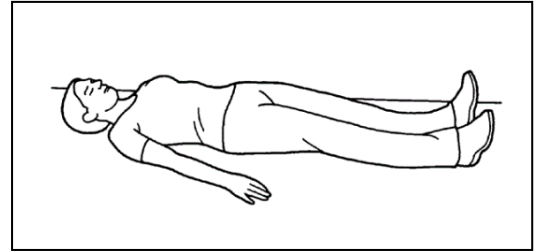
Bend your ankles towards you and then away from you.



Circle your ankles in both directions



Lying on your back, squeeze your buttocks firmly together. Hold for approx.5 secs. Relax. Repeat 10 times



Strengthening exercises

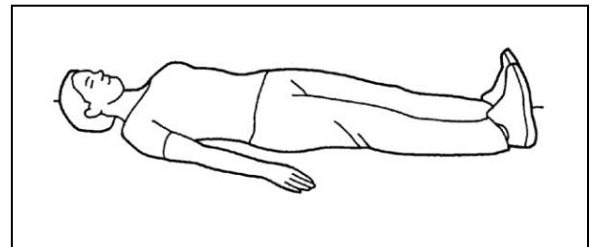
The following exercises are designed to help you regain movement and start to improve muscle strength.

These basic exercises should be done at least 2 – 3 times per day.

Static quads

This exercise is designed to help strengthen the muscles on the top of your thigh (the quadriceps). These muscles are very important in standing as they help to straighten your knee.

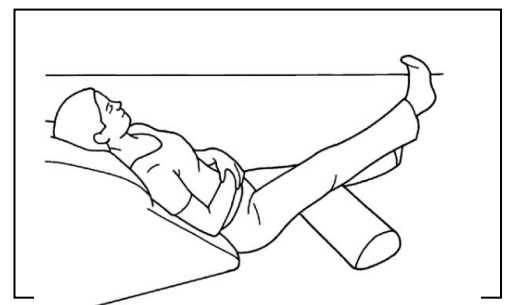
- 1 Get into a comfortable position in the bed, preferably sitting up as much as possible.
- 2 Imagine that you have a sponge under your knee and try to press your knee down into the bed to squeeze the sponge.
- 3 Hold this for 10 seconds and repeat 3 times on each leg.



Inner range quads

This exercise is a progression on the exercise above, it is designed again to work the quadriceps

- 1 Place a rolled up towel under you knee.
- 2 Push your knee down into the towel and try to lift your ankle off the bed thus straightening your knee.
- 3 Hold for 5 – 10 seconds and repeat 3 times on each leg.



Upper limb exercises

Clasp your hands together and raise both hands above your head as high as you can

Ensure that you keep your shoulders down and do not allow them to move towards your ears.

Repeat 5 to 10 times (again starting with 5 repetitions and building up to 10 repetitions)

Keep your fingers and hands moving. Try picking up an object: you may initially need to pick up objects with both hands.

Bend and straighten your elbows, aim to touch your nose then the top of your head.

Aim to do 5 of each on each side then build up to 10.

Discharge home

Planning to go home may begin whilst you are still on critical care and will continue when you reach the ward. It is important for the multi-disciplinary team to establish what your home set up is so we can set goals aimed at getting you back to your previous function.

This information is also important as it will help us establish if there is any equipment or aids that we can provide in order to make things easier for you once you return home.

Initially when you first get out of bed you may be given a walking aid to provide you with some additional support. You may be discharged home still using a walking aid and we may refer you to the Community Physiotherapy Team (with your permission) in order to continue your progress at home. Your physiotherapist may give you a programme of exercises to continue with at home.

Going home is a big step which will be taken only when all of the multi-disciplinary team are happy that you are ready and are happy with the arrangements that have been made.

When you leave critical care you will be followed up on the ward initially by one of the critical care team and you will also be given the opportunity to come to a follow up clinic 2 months after discharge.

Once discharged home from hospital you may also be invited to attend FIT Group (Following Intensive Therapy). This is an exercise based class specifically designed

to aid the rehabilitation of patients who have had an admission to the intensive therapy unit which is run by physiotherapists.

If you would like any information regarding access to the West Suffolk Hospital and its facilities please visit the website for AccessAble (the new name for DisabledGo)
<https://www.accessable.co.uk/organisations/west-suffolk-nhs-foundation-trust>



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