

Healthier Communities,  
Outstanding Care



Sherwood Forest Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# Home exercise programme

Information for patients



Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Date issued: \_\_\_\_\_ Given by: \_\_\_\_\_

# Introduction

This leaflet is an easy to follow guide of your recommended exercise programme. Your cardiac rehabilitation nurse or physiotherapist will advise you regarding the intensity and suitability of each exercise.

## Remember:

- Always warm up and cool down after exercising. This can be done by walking around the house, garden or on the spot for 5 minutes, then walking on the spot for another 5 to 10 minutes including the stretches described in the stretches leaflet, so that you keep moving in between stretching.
- Exercise aerobically, this should make you comfortably short of breath (level 11-13 RPE/Borg scale).
- At all times when exercising, you should feel comfortable and be able to speak in full sentences.
- Aim to exercise at least three times a week, but go for a walk on other days.
- Always give yourself at least two rest days a week when you do not exercise.
- Always ensure you do not dehydrate when exercising by drinking enough water.
- Wait two hours after a heavy meal before exercising.
- Do not exercise when you have an infection or feel unwell. Rest and resume exercise when you feel well again.
- Stop exercising if you experience severe shortness of breath, chest pain or tightness, nausea, faintness or dizziness. Use your GTN spray as you have been taught, if appropriate, or consult a doctor if you are experiencing problems.

**Warm up and cool down** – It is essential that you warm up before you begin to exercise and cool down immediately after you have finished. This allows your heart and body to gradually adjust to the change in activity. When walking or cycling, warming up may be as simple as starting off slowly and gradually building up. Cooling down would be slowing down gradually before you stop. The home exercise programme uses many different muscles, so the warm up and cooling down needs to move and stretch the areas of your body which will be exercised.

## Warm up

For 10-15 minutes as guided up to Borg rating 11.

# The BORG Scale of Perceived Exertion (RPE)

This scale is to assess how hard you find the exercise. Choose the number that best describes your level of exertion. This will give you a good idea of the intensity level of your activity, which will help you to speed up or slow down your movements to reach the desired range.

- |   |                                      |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <b>6</b> No exertion  | <b>14</b>                            |
| <b>7</b> Extremely light  | <b>15</b> Hard (heavy)               |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>16</b>                            |
| <b>9</b> Very light (gentle walking)                              | <b>17</b> Very hard (very strenuous) |
| <b>10</b>   | <b>18</b>                            |
| <b>11</b>   | <b>19</b> Extremely hard             |
| <b>12</b>   | <b>20</b> Maximal exertion           |
| <b>13</b> Somewhat hard<br>(some effort but feels OK to continue) |                                      |

## Exercises

These are the aerobic exercises and they should be performed for one minute each. Then repeated if you feel able. Aim to rate your RPE at 11-13, but don't exceed 13. You can do this seated as an alternative, or using a single arm/leg if you aren't able to stand.

- 1. Sit-to-stand:** With arms at your sides, bend slightly forwards and stand slowly. Lower yourself back to your seat slowly and repeat.
- 2. Heel raises:** Stand supported by a chair if needed, and alternate raising heels off the floor.
- 3. Knee lifts:** Stand, supported by a chair if needed. Raise your right knee and touch with your left hand. This can be done sitting if easier.
- 4. Upright row:** Stand with your hands in front of your hips/waist. Slide your hands up your body towards your chest, making sure you push your elbows up and out – try to keep your elbows higher than your wrists. Try not to lean backwards. Lower both arms back to the start position and repeat. You can also perform this exercise in sitting.
- 5. Step ups:** Stand in front of a step or stair. Step up and down with one leg leading and then repeat with the other leg leading.
- 6. Front and side arm raises:** Stand (with light hand weights if able) and raise arms in front of you to shoulder height and lower. Then raise arms to the side to shoulder height and lower. Repeat and keep your feet moving / walk on the spot.
- 7. Side taps:** Step right leg to right side then back to centre, then step left leg to left side and back to centre. Supported by a chair if necessary.
- 8. Arm curls:** With palms facing upwards and both elbows held to to your side, bend alternate arms at the elbow. Add light hand weights (dumbbells or 500ml bottles of water, 1-2kg) to increase the intensity. Keep your feet moving / walk on the spot.
- 9. Shuttle walk:** Place two chairs or other marker objects a few feet apart and walk around them, swinging your arms – walk as briskly as feels comfortable.
- 10. Horizontal row:** Stand with your feet hip width apart. Raise your hands to about shoulder height (palms can face inwards or towards the floor). Slowly pull your elbows backwards towards the ribcage, bringing your hands closer to your chest. You should feel your shoulder blades gently squeezing towards one another. You can also perform this exercise in sitting.

# Stretching

## How to stretch:

1. Stretches should only be taken to the point of slight discomfort, never pain.
2. Never 'bounce' a stretch – this causes the muscle to tighten rather than stretch.
3. Relaxed sustained stretches are the most effective. Hold each stretch for at least 10 seconds, longer if possible in the cool down. Avoid holding your breath whilst you stretch.
4. Do not attempt any stretch that you feel uncomfortable with or that aggravates any other problems.
5. Stretches are more effective if muscles have been warmed up through gentle exercise such as walking on the spot for five minutes.

## When and why to stretch

Stretching can be done after the warm-up, just prior to the main exercise if you feel it helps, however you should always try to do them after an exercise session because:

1. Muscles are less prone to injury when they are warmed up – they become more elastic.
2. Stretches help to disperse metabolic waste and can reduce muscle soreness after exercising.
3. Stretches can help improve the freedom of movement at your joints. Leg stretches and mobility movements

# Leg stretches and mobility movements

## a) Hamstring stretch



Stand with the leg to be stretched in front. Keep the front leg straight and bend the back knee. Lean the body forwards so that you can feel a stretch in the back of the front leg. Pull the toes up.

## b) Calf stretch



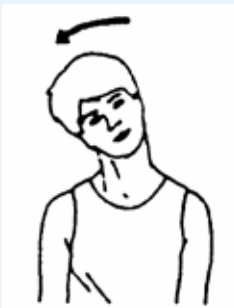
Stand in a walking position with the leg to be stretched out behind you. Take support from a wall or chair. Lean forwards until you feel a stretch in the calf of the leg. Hold for 5-10 seconds on both legs.

## c) Ankle stretch / mobility



Hold onto a wall or table. Rotate your ankle. Change directions. Repeat five times each ankle.

## Neck and shoulder stretches:

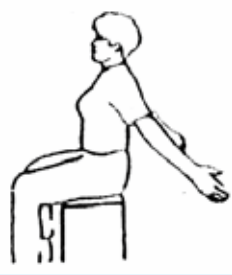


a) Side bending – lean one ear down towards the shoulder on the same side. Repeat 5 times each way. This is fine for most people but you should stop if you feel dizzy or faint. Hold for 5-10 seconds.



b) Shoulder rolling – roll your shoulders in both directions. Repeat five times.

### c) Shoulder mobility



Push your shoulders forwards, stretch the arms diagonally forwards and down. Hold for 5-10 seconds. Reach your arms behind you with your thumbs upwards. Pull your shoulder blades together. Hold for 5-10 seconds.

### d) Tricep stretch



Grasp your elbow with the other hand and push back and down gently until you can feel stretching at the back of your upper arm. Hold for 5-10 seconds on both arms.

## Relaxation technique

This relaxation procedure has been practised for over 20 years. It has been studied by researchers and found to be effective.

You will feel very relaxed and calm as a result. It is not the same as hypnosis and you will not lose consciousness at any point.

Now that many health problems such as heart disease, diabetes and cancer have been linked to high stress levels it makes sense to introduce relaxation into your life, so try to make time for relaxation every day.

It is often easier to learn after exercise, so relaxation is recommended at the end of each exercise session, and should last about 10-15 minutes. You may want to play some soothing music or just be in silence.

### **Abdominal breathing**

Let your attention focus on your abdomen. Feel it swelling as you breathe in and sink as you breathe out. Keep the breathing as gentle and slow as you can. Don't force it. You may wish to feel this sensation by putting one hand high on your chest and one on your abdomen until you have mastered it.

## **Important note**

You may find this relaxation difficult in the beginning – it's a skill that usually takes weeks of practice to master. We would suggest you practice the technique daily at first. View it like learning a musical instrument - those that practice improve; those that don't, won't.

## **Using abdominal breathing to relax**

Make yourself comfortable lying or sitting and close your eyes. Gently turn your attention to your breathing. Begin by noticing it in a general kind of way, then slowly bring your mind to focus on the movement of your abdomen. Keep your attention fixed on the movement of your abdomen – swelling as the air is breathed in and sinking as the air is breathed out. Allow the air to pass in and out quite naturally while you are concentrating on the abdominal movement. Do not try to influence the breathing rhythm but let yourself flow with it.

If your mind wanders gently bring it back to the swelling and sinking again – try counting the breaths to hold your attention – one count for every breath out and when you get to ten (or lose count), start again. Then try to focus your attention on each part of your body from your feet up to your head, releasing any tension and allowing your muscles to relax and become heavy.

Please continue for 10-15 minutes.

Before you open your eyes, stretch out and wait a few moments before moving, slowly sitting up and becoming alert and aware again.

## **Using words as cues**

Let your breathing be as natural as possible. Just before you breathe out, think of the word relax, slowly release the air as you focus on the word, breathing in, and repeat the sequence. Keep the rhythm as gentle as you can and avoid deliberately deepening your breaths. Continue for a few moments.

**If you have any questions or concerns, please discuss this with the Cardiac Rehabilitation team when you attend for exercise or tel: 01623 672296.**

For additional information and exercises go to the BHF website or click the following link:

[www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/cardiac-rehabilitation-at-home/cardiac-rehabilitation-exercise-videos](http://www.bhf.org.uk/information-support/support/cardiac-rehabilitation-at-home/cardiac-rehabilitation-exercise-videos)



**For more information, see the British Heart Foundation website or copy and paste the following link into your browser: <https://www.bhf.org.uk/informationsupport/support/cardiac-rehabilitation-at-home>**

### **Further sources of information**

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

### **Patient Experience Team (PET)**

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

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