

# Keeping active in hospital

## Information for patients and carers

Staying active while in hospital can aid your recovery and help you to maintain your independence. To maintain your normal daily routine and allow you to return home quicker, we encourage our patients to:

- get up
- get dressed
- get moving

To support your relatives and friends in hospital to keep active, please ensure they are provided with:

- day clothes
- slippers
- toiletries
- glasses, hearing aids, dentures or walking aids if required

This leaflet provides advice about keeping active in hospital. If you have any queries or concerns, please speak to a member of the ward staff.

### Confirming your identity

Before you have a treatment or procedure, our staff will ask you your name and date of birth and check your ID band. If you do not have an ID band we will also ask you to confirm your address. If we do not ask these questions, then please ask us to check. Ensuring your safety is our primary concern.

## Did you know?

- While in hospital, older people can spend up to 83% of their time sitting in bed and often a further 12% in a chair (source: Arora, 2018).
- When people over the age of 80 are admitted in hospital and remain in bed for 10 days, this can lead to 10 years of muscle ageing (source: Dolan, 2019).
- Up to 65% of older people can experience decline in function during hospitalisation (source: British Geriatric Society, 2020).
- For the older person, regaining function can often take twice as long (source: Dolan and Holt, 2021).

## Deconditioning syndrome

When you are in hospital, staying in bed and not moving can affect your physical function and wellbeing. Bed rest and inactivity can lead to older people developing additional complications and being unable to complete everyday tasks. This is known as deconditioning syndrome.

Staying in bed and not moving can lead to other problems, and result in remaining in hospital for a longer time. Problems can include:

- reduced muscle strength that can cause a greater risk of falling, loss in confidence and further mobility problems
- increased risk of acquiring hospital infections, breakdown of your skin causing pressure sores and further decline to health and wellbeing
- a loss of independence with everyday tasks including washing and dressing
- becoming disorientated and confused
- reduced appetite, poor digestion and constipation

## What can you do to stay active in hospital?

If you are unsure what you can safely do, please ask a healthcare member on the ward. If needed, we will complete an assessment to identify how you normally get around, and any risks that may affect you from moving on your own when you return home.

### Keep your normal daily routine to 'do things yourself'

- Carry on doing what you would normally do at home, for example, washing and dressing yourself, and walking to the toilet or bathroom rather than using a commode.
- Ask a family member or friend to bring in daywear including underwear, socks and comfortable and practical shoes that do not fall off, toiletries including toothpaste and toothbrush, and any glasses, hearing aids, dentures or walking aids you need.
- Sit out of bed and change your position regularly.
- Eat and drink regularly, sitting in your chair for meals.
- Move around the ward regularly, either on your own or ask for assistance.
- Complete gentle exercises on your own throughout the day, either in bed or in the chair. Just ask if you wish to be shown appropriate ones.

### Advise the ward staff:

- about your home environment, your normal daily routine and if you receive any help at home from family or carers

- what you can do normally to be as independent as possible and allow you to return to your usual ability or as close to this as possible
- if you need a walking frame or stick to move around
- if you wear glasses, hearing aids or dentures

## How can family members, carers or friends help?

- Provide clothes, appropriate footwear, toiletries, and glasses, hearing aids, dentures or walking aids if needed.
- Help your relative or friend to eat, drink, get dressed and walk where appropriate.

## Sources

- Arora, A. (2018) '[#End PJ Paralysis: the revolutionary movement helping frail older people](#)' NHS England
- British Geriatric Society (2020) '[Sit up, get dressed and keep moving!](#)' [www.bgs.org.uk](http://www.bgs.org.uk).
- Dolan, B. (2019) '[Valuing 350,000 patients' time](#)' NHS England
- Dolan, B. and Holt, L. (2023) 'Deconditioning costs people their time, their independence and sometimes their lives' Global Summit 2022 - End PJ Paralysis

## Sharing your information

We have teamed up with Guy's and St Thomas' Hospitals in a partnership known as King's Health Partners Academic Health Sciences Centre. We are working together to give our patients the best possible care, so you might find we invite you for appointments at Guy's or St Thomas'. To make sure everyone you meet always has the most up-to-date information about your health, we may share information about you between the hospitals.

## Care provided by students

We provide clinical training where our students get practical experience by treating patients. Please tell your doctor or nurse if you do not want students to be involved in your care. Your treatment will not be affected by your decision.

## PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that offers support, information and assistance to patients, relatives and visitors. They can also provide help and advice if you have a concern or complaint that staff have not been able to resolve for you. They can also pass on praise or thanks to our teams. The PALS office is in the main hospital foyer at PRUH and they would be happy to advise you.

PALS at Princess Royal University Hospital, Farnborough Common, Orpington, Kent  
BR6 8ND

Tel: 01689 863252

Email: [kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net](mailto:kch-tr.palspruh@nhs.net)

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