Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Beginner Bed Exercises

This information describes how to do beginner bed exercises that will increase your strength and help you move more freely.

You may need to modify or skip some of the exercises if you have certain conditions, such as:

- Blood clots
- Broken bones
- Weakened bones
- Recent surgery on your spine, arms, or legs

Your healthcare provider will tell you which exercises you can do. If you have any concerns, talk with your healthcare provider.

You should also tell your healthcare provider if you have new or increased pain while you're doing these exercises. You should feel no more than slight strain as you do them. They shouldn't cause pain.

If you have chest pressure, dizziness, or shortness of breath, stop doing the exercises. Call 911 if your symptoms don't stop after you rest.

Please visit www.mskcc.org/pe/beginner-bed-exercises-video to watch this video.

Beginner bed exercise tips

- Try to do each of the first 5 exercises for 30 seconds.
- If you need to stop before 30 seconds, that's OK. Just be ready to start the next exercise on time.
- You should rest for 30 seconds before you start each exercise.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth while you're exercising. Don't hold your breath. Count out loud to keep your breaths evenly paced.
- If you're in a hospital bed, raise the head of the bed. Then place pillows behind you.
- If you're at home, place pillows behind you.

Exercise items

You should have the following items nearby before you start the exercises:

- Socks
- Pillow

Ankle circles

1. Lie back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. First, rotate your ankles to the right (see Figure 1). Try to draw as wide a circle as you can with your toes.
3. Continue for 15 seconds. Then rotate your ankles to the left for 15 seconds.
4. Then rest for 30 seconds.

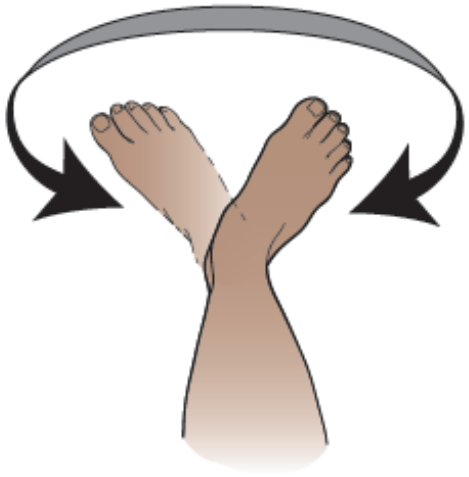


Figure 1. Ankle Circles

Quadricep (quad) sets

1. Lie back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Push the back of your right knee down into the bed while tightening the muscles on the top of your thigh (see Figure 2).
3. Hold this position and count out loud to 3. Then relax.
4. Repeat with your other leg.
5. If you'd like to challenge yourself, you can do this exercise with both legs at the same time.
6. Repeat steps 2 to 4 for 30 seconds, if you can.
7. Then rest for 30 seconds.

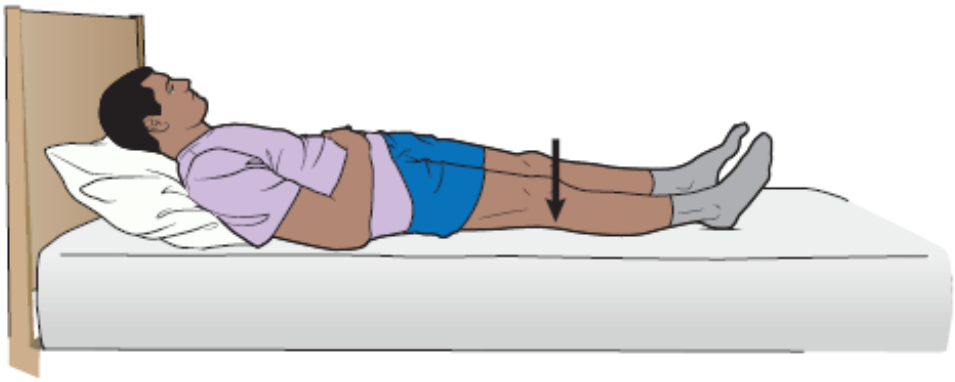


Figure 2. Quadricep (Quad) Sets

Heel slides

1. Lie back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows. Wear socks to protect your heels during this exercise.
2. Breathe in and gently slide your heel as close to your buttocks (butt) as you can without being uncomfortable. (see Figure 3).
3. Then breathe out and gently slide your heel away from your buttocks until your knee is resting on the bed.
4. Repeat with your other leg.
5. Repeat steps 2 to 4 for 30 seconds, if you can.



Figure 3. Heel Slides

Buttock squeezes

1. Lie back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Straighten your legs as much as you can.
3. Squeeze your buttocks together tightly (see Figure 4).
4. Hold the position and count out loud to 3, then relax.
5. Repeat steps 2 to 4 for 30 seconds, if you can.

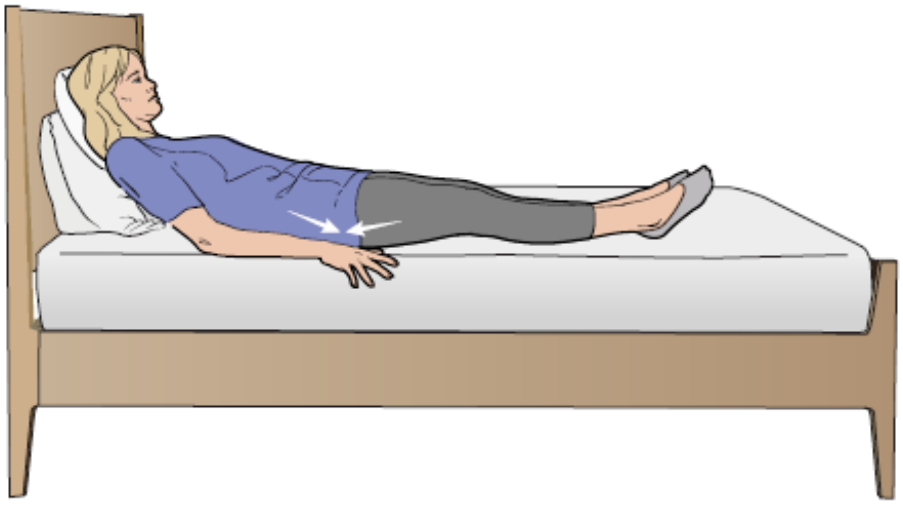


Figure 4. Buttock Squeezes

Crossbody reach

1. Lie back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Bend your right elbow, then turn your head and reach across your body to the left as far as you comfortably can (see Figure 5)
3. Return your right arm to your right side.
4. Repeat with your left arm.
5. Repeat steps 2 to 4 for 30 seconds, if you can.



Figure 5. Crossbody Reach

Diaphragmatic breathing

1. Lie back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Place your legs in a comfortable position. Place one or both of your hands over your abdomen (see Figure 6).
3. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose. Your abdomen should rise, but your upper chest should stay still and relaxed.
4. Breathe out slowly through pursed lips (like blowing out candles). As you breathe out, slowly and gently pull your abdomen towards your spine.
5. Repeat steps 2 to 4 for about 30 seconds, if you can.

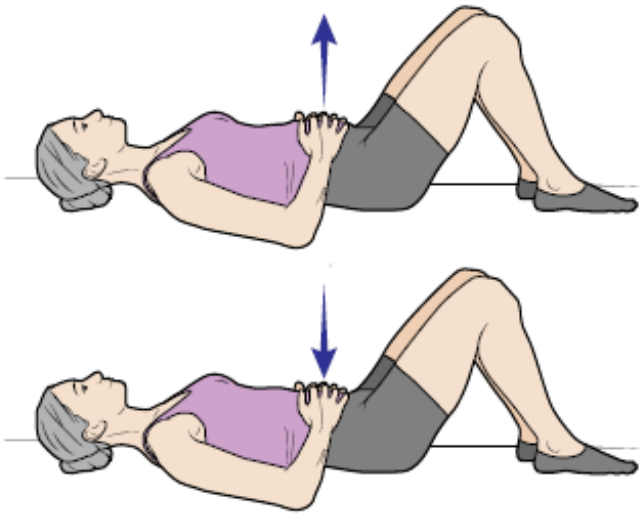


Figure 6. Diaphragmatic Breathing

If you have questions or concerns, contact your healthcare provider. A member of your care team will answer Monday through Friday from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Outside those hours, you can leave a message or talk with another MSK provider. There is always a doctor or nurse on call. If you're not sure how to reach your healthcare provider, call 212-639-2000.

For more resources, visit www.mskcc.org/pe to search our virtual library.

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