PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

General Exercise Program: Level 1

This information explains Level 1 of a general exercise program that will help you with your physical recovery.

An exercise program with gentle movements will help prevent stiffness. It will also help you move better. These exercises can be done to help with the effects of bed rest and not being able to move. Before starting this program, talk with your healthcare provider.

These exercises aren't meant to be a total fitness program. They are designed to help you use some of the large muscles in your body. Your healthcare provider, or rehabilitation (rehab) therapist may change the exercises to meet your needs.

Exercise tips

- Dress comfortably. You should wear clothing that won't limit your movements. You can wear a hospital gown, pajamas, or athletic clothing.
- For the exercises that you do while lying down, support your head and shoulders on 1 or more pillows. Make sure you're comfortable.
- Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Do the exercise movements when you breathe out.
- Don't hold your breath while doing any of these exercises. Count out loud during the exercises to keep your breaths evenly paced.
- Stop any exercise that causes you pain or discomfort and tell your physical therapist. You can continue to do the other exercises.

Exercises

Heel slides

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows. Wear socks to protect your heels during this exercise.
2. Gently slide your heel toward your buttocks as far as is comfortable for you (see Figure 1).
3. Gently slide your heel away from your buttocks until your knee is resting on the bed.
4. Repeat 10 times.
5. Repeat with your other leg.



Figure 1. Heel slides

Short arc quads

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Place a rolled towel or pillow under your knees so that your knees are slightly bent.
3. Straighten 1 of your legs by lifting your heel and pressing the back of your knee into the towel (see Figure 2).
4. Hold the position and count out loud to 5.
5. Gently lower your leg.
6. Repeat 10 times.
7. Repeat with your other leg.

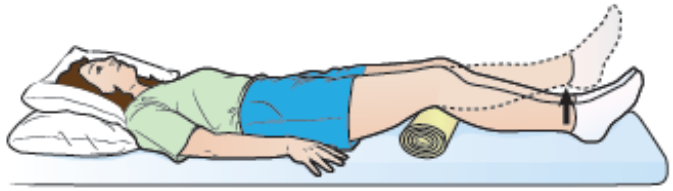


Figure 2. Short arc quads

Quadriceps sets

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Straighten your legs as much as you can.
3. Push the back of your knee down into the bed while tightening the muscles on the top of your thigh (see Figure 3).
4. Hold the position and count out loud to 5.
5. Relax. Repeat 10 times.
6. Repeat with your other leg.

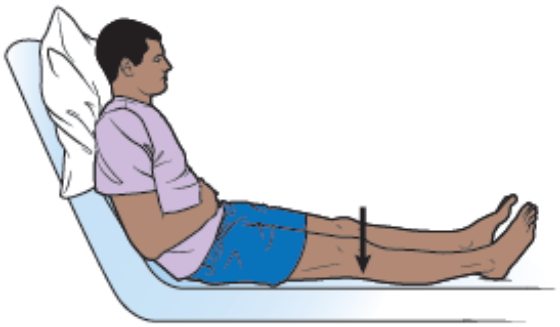


Figure 3. Quadricep sets

Gluteal sets

If you have a urinary catheter attached to your thigh, be careful not to pull on it as you squeeze your buttocks.

1. Lie on your 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 5.
5. Relax your buttocks.
6. Repeat 10 times.



Figure 4. Gluteal sets

Abductor strengthening exercise

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Straighten your legs as much as you can and keep your toes pointed up to the ceiling.
3. Slide 1 leg out to the side (see Figure 5).
4. Hold the position and count out loud to 5.
5. Return to the starting position.
6. Repeat 10 times.
7. Repeat with your other leg.



Figure 5. Abductor strengthening

Modified straight leg raises

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Bend your left leg and place your foot flat on the bed (see Figure 6).
3. Keeping your right leg straight, lift it from the bed until your knees are even with each other (see Figure 7).
4. Slowly lower your right leg onto the bed and relax the leg.
5. Repeat 10 times.
6. Switch legs and repeat the exercise.



Figure 6. Bending your leg



Figure 7. Lifting your leg

Elbow flexion (bending) and extension

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Bend your knees and place your feet flat on the bed.
3. With your palms facing down, reach out your arms to touch the top of your knees (see Figure 8).
4. Turn your palms face up and touch your shoulders (see Figure 9).

5. Straighten your elbows and return your hands (palms facing down) and arms to your sides. Relax.
6. Repeat 10 times.



Figure 8. Reaching your arms out



Figure 9. Touching your shoulders

Overhead stretch for arms

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows.
2. Start with both arms close to your sides. Raise your arms forward and up over your head (see Figure 10).
3. Keep your arms on the pillow so that your arms are near your ears (see Figure 11).
4. Hold the position and count out loud to 5.
5. Slowly bring your arms up in the air and return them to the starting position.
6. Repeat 10 times.



Figure 10. Both arms at your side



Figure 11. Overhead stretch

Ankle circles and pumps

Ankle circles

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows. You can also do this exercise while sitting.
2. Rotate your right ankle clockwise (to the right) 10 times (see Figure 12).
3. Rotate your ankle counter-clockwise (to the left) 10 times.
4. Repeat with your left ankle.



Figure 12. Ankle circles

Ankle pumps

1. Lie on your back with your head and shoulders supported on pillows. You can also do this exercise while sitting.
2. Point your toes up toward your nose (see Figure 13). You can do this with both feet at the same time.
3. Then, point them toward the floor (see Figure 14).
4. Repeat 10 times.



Figure 13. Pointing your toes up



Figure 14. Pointing your toes down

Marching in place

1. Sit in a chair with armrests and place your feet flat on the floor.
2. Slowly raise 1 knee without tilting or leaning backward (see Figure 15). You can prevent your upper body from tilting backward by holding the armrests.

3. Lower your leg and return your foot to the floor.
4. Repeat with your other leg.
5. Repeat 5 times.



Figure 15. Marching in place

Sitting kicks

1. Sit in a chair. Keep your feet flat on the floor.
2. Kick 1 foot up from the floor until your leg is straight out in front of you (see Figure 16).
3. Hold the position and count out loud to 5.
4. Lower your foot to the floor.
5. Repeat 10 times.
6. Repeat with your other leg.



Figure 16. Kicking your foot up

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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