Memorial Sloan Kettering Cancer Center

PATIENT & CAREGIVER EDUCATION

Stem Cell Transplant Stretching Program

This information describes a stretching program that will help you before and after your stem cell transplant, and during your recovery.

This exercise program stretches the muscle groups that you use for everyday activities. This program will help prevent you from feeling stiff and decrease the effects of bed rest and not being able to move. Your physical and occupational therapists will help guide you through the program.

Stop any exercise that causes you pain or discomfort and tell your occupational or physical therapist.

Do these exercises 3 times per day.

Stretching exercises

Forward neck stretch

1. Sit in a chair. Place both hands on the back of your head.
2. Using your hands, gently press your chin toward your chest (see Figure 1) until you feel a comfortable stretch along the back your neck.
3. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.
4. Slowly move your head back.



Figure 1. Forward neck stretch

Diagonal neck stretch

1. Sit in a chair.
2. Keeping your head facing forward, slowly lower your left ear to your left shoulder.
3. Move your head to the left so that your nose points toward your left armpit.
4. Place your left hand on the back of your head to gently press your chin closer to your chest (see Figure 2) until you feel a comfortable stretch along the side of your neck.
5. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.
6. Slowly move your head up.
7. Repeat on the other side.



Figure 2. Diagonal neck stretch: down

Side neck stretch

1. Sit in a chair.
2. Keeping your head facing forward, slowly bring your left ear to your left shoulder.
3. Place your left hand on the right side of your head to gently press your ear closer to your shoulder (see Figure 3) until you feel a comfortable stretch along the side of your neck.
4. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.
5. Slowly move your head up.
6. Repeat on the other side.



Figure 3. Side neck stretch

Knee to chest stretch

1. Lie down on your back.
2. Slowly bring both knees into your chest. Place your hands on your shins (under your knees).
3. Gently pull your knees into your chest until you feel a comfortable stretch in your buttocks and lower back (see Figure 4).
4. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.

5. Slowly move your legs away from your chest and lower them to the floor.



Figure 4. Knee to chest stretch

Hamstring stretch

1. Sit with your legs straight out in front of you.
2. Reach to touch your toes, keeping your knees and back straight (see Figure 5).
3. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.
4. Slowly release.



Figure 5. Hamstring stretch

Seated calf stretch

1. Sit with your legs straight out in front of you .
2. Loop a towel or sheet around the ball (top part right under your toes) of one foot.
3. Gently pull the towel or sheet toward you, keeping your toes pointed

toward the ceiling, until you feel a comfortable stretch in your calf (see Figure 6).

4. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.
5. Slowly release.
6. Repeat the stretch with your other leg.



Figure 6. Seated calf stretch

Seated hip stretch

1. Sit up in a chair and place your right ankle on your left knee (see Figure 7).
2. Gently lean forward until you feel a comfortable stretch in your right hip (see Figure 8).
3. Hold this position for 30 to 45 seconds.
4. Slowly release.
5. Repeat the stretch with your left leg.



Figure 7. Place ankle on knee



Figure 8. Lean forward

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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