

How and why to stay active when in hospital



Moving more will help you recover more quickly and get you home sooner

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Why is it important for me to stay as active as I can while I am in hospital?

Staying in bed or being inactive when in hospital can have an effect on your entire body. This is called 'deconditioning'

It can mean you:

- have reduced muscle strength, fitness and mobility (find it more difficult to move around)
- are at increased risk of falling
- have problems with blood pressure
- are at increased risk of infection and pressure sores (bed ulcers)
- lose some ability to do everyday tasks
- have a longer stay in hospital
- getting out of bed, getting dressed in your own clothes, and moving around the ward as soon as you can helps to prevent deconditioning

Be aware!

One week of bed rest results in around a 10% loss of muscle strength. The good news is you can prevent this from happening.

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What might happen if I do not get up and move around as much as I can?

It's possible that the following things could happen to you.

Each of these can increase the risk of some of the others also happening.

1. Staying in bed for a long time (for example over several days or weeks).
2. Increased risk of falls.
3. Increased confusion or disorientation (for example not knowing where you are or why you are there).
4. Constipation and incontinence (not being able to control when you pee and poo).
5. Poor appetite and digestion.
6. Increased risk of swallowing problems.
7. Risk of becoming even less mobile.
8. Increased risk of infection and your health getting worse.



What can I do reduce the chance that I may get deconditioning?

We want to help you to recover from your hospital stay as soon as possible. Eating and drinking well, getting out of bed, getting dressed and moving around will help you to recover more quickly and get you home sooner.

Eat

- Eating well gives you energy and helps you to recover more quickly. On average people who are well nourished spend 3 less days in hospital.
- Try including high protein foods (such as fish, meat, cheese, chickpeas, lentils or soya beans) in your meals as this helps to maintain muscle, improve healing and maintain a healthy immune system.
- Try milky drinks, creamy soups and puddings to boost your calorie intake.
- If you find it hard to manage big meals try snacking between meals. Ask the nurse looking after you for a snack.
- Ask friends or family to bring some of your favourite finger foods and drink.

Drink

- Drinking plenty helps you to stay well.
- Have a drink whenever you are offered one.
- Water, squash, milky drinks, and tea and coffee are all available on the wards. Just ask for a drink when you want one.
- Aim for at least 6 to 8 cups a day unless you have been advised otherwise.

Dress

- Dress in your own clothes. This makes you more likely to walk around, feel more confident and feel more like yourself.
- Ask friends, carers or relatives to bring some comfy clothes and footwear in for you.
- Try to get dressed yourself as soon as you are well enough or ask the ward staff to help you get into your own clothes.

Move

- Muscle strength can decrease by 2 to 5% per day when you're lying in bed. This means it might be more difficult to move around and do things when you get home.
- We will encourage you to get out of bed and moving as soon as possible.
- Try to sit in your chair during the day instead of staying in bed.
- Walk with family and friends. Ask us for help and use walking aids (such as a frame or stick) if you need to.
- It may help to bring in the walking aid that you use at home. Please speak to a member of the nursing team if you would like to use your walking aid.
- Ask your ward team about which simple exercises you could try.



Should everybody follow this advice?

Following this advice can help most people, so try to follow it unless we have advised you not to.

Please check with ward staff if you have any concerns or questions.

Family, friends and carers, we need you!

Eat: Bring in snacks that your relative or friend enjoys eating and encourage them to eat something when you visit.

Drink: Prompt your relative or friend to sip a drink when you are with them.

Be aware!

Please check with nursing staff which foods and drinks are suitable.

Dress: Please bring in:

- their usual day clothes
- supportive footwear with firm heel support (not open slippers)

Move:

- ask the nurses if your relative or friend can go for a walk
- walk with them around the bay and corridor
- bring in any walking aids used at home if needed

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Where can I find a list of exercises to do?

Please scan the QR code for a list of exercises you may be able to do to help keep you active in hospital. Check with your nurse that the exercises are right for you.



Where can I find further information or support?

- Advice about eating and drinking and hydration
www.uhsussex.nhs.uk/resources/eat-betterfeel-better
- You can find more information about how to stay active when in hospital at endpjparalysis.org

Your team are here to help, please ask the staff looking after you if you have any further questions.

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