

Therapy Department

Physiotherapy advice sheet for respiratory rehabilitation

Introduction

It is important to remember no two rehabilitation journeys are the same. Your therapists on the ward will guide your rehabilitation and work with you to set individual, realistic goals. The amount of progress you make each day will vary, you will have good and bad days, peaks and troughs, and some days you may feel you are taking a step backward, try not to feel disheartened. The same can be said for oxygen requirements, these are likely to go up and down and your daily rehabilitation will be adapted to reflect this. This is all normal in recovery.

This leaflet aims to discuss some of the issues that may impact your rehabilitation journey.

Tiredness (Fatigue)

Working hard is important for getting better but getting enough rest is just as important in reducing the impact that tiredness has on your progress. Tiredness can be physical, mental or emotional.

Sleep is the most important aspect of preventing tiredness. Try to get good periods of regular sleep. In order to sleep well, try to avoid napping during the day, have a consistent nighttime routine and avoid using electronic devices just before bed.



Patient Information

Slow down and pace activities, little and often. Be aware of your limitations and stop to rest and recover as required. Ensure you plan and prioritise activities; do not try to fit too much in, make sure you complete the most important things first, allow plenty of time to carry out tasks, and consider spreading responsibilities over consecutive days or asking for help. Ensure you adapt activities as able for example, consider sitting down during tasks like personal care and cooking. Try to take allocated times for rest and relaxation. If you increase your activity levels then feel drained the next day, consider if tasks can be reduced or broken up into different sessions, for example 3 days of 15 minutes of exercise instead of 1 day of 45 minutes. Don't underestimate energy requirements of everyday tasks.

Psychological Wellbeing

Your mental wellbeing is about how you are feeling right now, and how well you can cope with daily life. It can affect the way we feel about ourselves and others, and about the things we face in our lives.

You won't have the same support you had in hospital, and it can be a difficult time for you and your relatives. Setting small goals in your daily routine can help you recover and show that you are improving. A small goal could be something as simple as making a drink for yourself or walking a few steps further without needing to rest. Don't push yourself too hard as this can end up making your recovery take longer.

Always consider the wider picture and try to be kind to yourself. If you have had a bad day or haven't achieved your daily goal, try not to be too hard on yourself. Look back at how far you have come and try to keep your end goals in mind.

Some ideas to help with your mental wellbeing are to; keep in touch digitally with people, keep to a routine, keep physically active, keep your mind active/maintain your psychological fitness but don't become overwhelmed by information overload, get as much sunlight and fresh air as possible, find ways to relax and be creative.

Patient Information

If you do find yourself having unhelpful thoughts/ feelings you can seek help from the following services.

Samaritans – Tel: 116 123

Mind Helpline – Tel: 0300 123 3393 or 0116 278 0865

Smoking

People who smoke are more likely to have respiratory illness, may have more complications, and can take longer to recover.

Smoking changes your airways and lungs and can cause serious lung damage and health conditions. Smoking causes the lungs to produce more sputum. Smoking also slows down and destroys the small hairs (cilia) that clean the lungs, causing the build-up of sputum. These changes make you cough more. If sputum remains on your lungs it can increase the chances of a chest infection. Additionally, smoke is a toxin that irritates airways, making them narrow and it harder to get air in and out.

Breathing in second hand smoke can also be a risk factor and can cause the same health problems as smoking. It is important to avoid second hand smoke at home and in other enclosed spaces.

Stopping smoking improves respiratory health. Breathing, circulation and lung function improve, and sputum and debris can be cleared from airways without the need for constant coughing.

Help to stop smoking is readily available from your GP, pharmacist or by searching NHS stop smoking services online.

NHS – <https://www.nhs.uk/smokefree>

Healthy Lifestyles – Tel: 0800 122 3780 or visit www.hlscoventry.org

Patient Information

Nutrition

In Hospital

During a hospital admission it can be common to lose weight. The nursing staff will monitor your weight and may provide additional menu options or milkshakes to boost your intake. If weight continues to reduce or you have concerns you will be referred to a Dietitian.

Going Home

If your weight is less than it was when you were admitted to hospital, it is important to keep an eye on this over the next month. The below link will help you to monitor this.

<https://www.malnutritionselfscreening.org/self-screening.html>

It is important to maintain an adequate diet, particularly protein, to help rebuild muscle alongside the exercises recommended by your Physiotherapist. If you continue to lose weight, or are stable, however would like to regain some weight, visit this link for some first line strategies;

<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/malnutrition.html>

Once you have made changes to support your intake, if your weight continues to reduce, or using the above link your risk score increases to 'high', it is important you contact your GP who can provide some additional advice; they may refer you to a Dietitian for an outpatient or telephone appointment.

If you have recovered fully and your weight is stable, it is important to maintain a healthy weight to avoid future health complications. Your weight can be managed by eating a healthy balanced diet and participating in regular physical activity.

Physical Activity

Physical activity does not necessarily mean high level exercise. In the first instance you should monitor your step count and therefore daily activity levels with a pedometer, smart watch or phone app, aiming to gradually increase your steps.

Patient Information

Day to day functional activity is important; how active you are at home, work and in your daily chores. Try to make small lifestyle changes to include more activity and gradually build this up, for example; walking around the block daily, using static seated pedals, walking to the shops or to get the newspaper, longer walks with the dog or children, gardening, manual housework (vacuuming/ cleaning windows), step-ups on the bottom step of your stairs, spot marching whilst brushing your teeth or at the kitchen worktop, taking the stairs rather than the lift option or cycling to work.

During your rehabilitation, your Physiotherapist will guide you on what types of physical activity will best suit you for your recovery.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this Information in another language or format please contact the Therapy Department on 024 7696 6013 and we will do our best to meet your needs.

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