

Home activity programme after cardiac surgery

Information for patients



This programme is to help you to return safely to your normal activities and to regain your full strength after surgery.

It is a guide of how much activity to do. However, take notice of how you are feeling and adjust your activity accordingly.

If there are some activities you do which are not included in the guide, ask your physiotherapist when you may start to do these activities again.

At first

Walking

1. Walk twice daily for 5-10 minutes each time.
2. Try to increase the walk by 1-2 minutes each day.
3. Walk at a comfortable pace. You should be able to keep up a conversation while you walk. If you cannot, slow down a little.
4. Walk under comfortable conditions – e.g. avoid times when it is very hot or very cold.
5. Keep yourself warm.
6. Do not take the dog with you in the first few weeks.
7. Do not walk if you are unwell.
8. Do not walk immediately after meals – wait approximately 45 minutes before exercising.
9. Try to walk on level ground – avoid hills. If hills are unavoidable, pace yourself more slowly.
10. Build up to at least 20-30 minutes daily.
11. If possible walk with someone (at your pace) until you feel confident to walk alone.

While walking, stop if you experience:

- undue shortness of breath
- chest pain
- nausea
- headache
- inappropriate tiredness
- muscle cramps
- dizziness
- persistent palpitations

Rest

If symptoms recur consult your doctor.

Posture

You should be aware of your posture at all times – whether lying down, sitting or walking. You need to try and keep your head upright and your back straight. If working at a desk or computer, be particularly attentive to your posture.

After surgery you may experience back, neck or shoulder pain. If this persists, consult your doctor as physiotherapy may be helpful.

Do not neglect any type of severe pain

In the first week or two at home you may feel very tired and find it hard to keep up with the suggested exercise level. Do not become discouraged as this is common – persevere and you will continue to feel better day by day.

Walking is an important form of exercise – it will help you to make the most of your operation.

Stages of your recovery

Space your activities through the day. Adjust your activity level by how you feel. Build up walking as advised.

Stage I – Convalescent week

- continue with the same exercise level you have been doing in hospital
- re-establish your normal routine e.g. getting dressed, mealtimes
- rest for an hour in the afternoon
- restrict visitors to family members
- climb stairs slowly
- light activities e.g. making cups of tea/coffee and light snacks
- avoid wide arm movements, stooping and bending
- quiet, relaxing interests – e.g. reading, music, TV, cards, chess, painting pictures, pottering around the house

Stage II – (Approximately 2nd week after discharge from the John Radcliffe)

- light activities e.g. making a light meal, tidying the house, tidying up the bed (not changing the sheets)
- washing dishes
- putting laundry into washing machine, not carrying the load or hanging it out on the line
- light garden activities e.g. hand watering with hose or tending indoor plants
- stooping and bending occasionally
- short drives as a passenger

Stage III – (Approximately 3rd week after discharge from the John Radcliffe)

- light activities in the garden e.g. watering with small light watering can (less than 10lbs)
- half day outings – visit friends
- shopping – short periods only; avoid busy times and do not carry parcels or push trolleys

Stage IV (Approximately 4th week after discharge from the John Radcliffe)

- household activities e.g. light ironing, hanging out washing (have help with sheets and towels), make beds (have help to change them), light sweeping
- light weeding, trowelling, pruning
- fishing from a pier, bank or bridge only
- indoor bowls
- film shows or spectator sports

Stage V (Approximately 5th week after discharge from the John Radcliffe)

- most routine chores (except those requiring prolonged stooping and bending), cleaning the bathroom, mopping floors

Stage VI (Approx. 6th week after discharge from the John Radcliffe)

- most household activities as normal except vacuuming, heavy gardening (raking leaves, lawn mowing).

Remember, break up larger tasks into 2-3 smaller tasks initially.

Resuming activities

Below is a guide which shows when you may be able to resume (re-start) many activities after your surgery. The timing will vary from one individual to another in accordance with each person's progress.

ACTIVITY	Number of weeks after surgery you can re-start the activity
Sexual intercourse (avoid weight bearing positions or pressure on wound)	3-4
Domestic Tasks: Lifting (but nothing over 10lbs e.g. kettle full of water)	6
Ironing	4
Washing (light)	4
Raking leaves	10-12
Lawn moving	10-12
Vacuuming	10-12
Heavy pushing or pulling	12
Heavy digging in the garden	12
Heavy lifting	12
Light work	6-8
Manual work	12
Swimming:	
– paddling	6
– breast stroke	10
– freestyle	12

Golf

- putting 2
- driving 12

Darts & comparable arm games 6

Lawn bowls 6-7

Cycling

- stationary 4-6
- moving 12

Fishing 12

Car Driving * 6

* You must inform your car insurers that you have had cardiac surgery.

Other activities:

- Jogging
- Squash
- Tennis
- Badminton
- Circuit work / aerobics
- Rowing
- Canoeing
- Hiking

After 12 weeks discuss these activities with your GP or surgeon before starting them. Remember to include warm/up cool down.

- These tables are only a guide and may be changed by your doctor.

How to contact us

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the John Radcliffe Hospital switchboard between 8.30am-4.30pm Monday-Friday on:

Tel: (01865) 741166, and ask for Bleep 1944

(Monday-Friday 8.30am-4.30pm)

Further information

www.bhf.org.uk

If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call **01865 221473** or email **PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk**

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