

# Passive movements

Self stretches for the lower limbs



**Information for patients**

Therapy Services



**PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



## General information

Passive movements are exercises that we recommend to people who cannot move their legs themselves. This is because, when legs become paralysed, the joints and muscles may become stiff and fixed into one position through lack of movement.

## Why is it important to do these exercises?

By putting your joints through a range of movements regularly you will:

- Prevent / reduce stiffness and painful joints.
- Increase circulation and decrease swelling.
- Ensure you keep a useful range of movement to allow you to get dressed, sit correctly in your wheelchair and perform other functional activities.

## How long will it take me to do the exercises?

The exercises described in this leaflet do not take long to do and can easily be fitted into your day at a time to suit you. You should do them as well as any other exercises that you have jointly agreed with your physiotherapist

## How often should I do these exercises?

You should aim to go through the full range of exercises about 5 to 10 times each, 2 or 3 times a week. The movements should be slow and rhythmical but be careful not to over-stretch.

These exercises will help to keep a range of useful movement, but don't forget; standing, lying prone (on your stomach), and even the daily movement that your limbs are put through as you get dressed will help too.

## Is there a risk in doing these exercises?

Be careful not to over-stretch when doing these exercises as it may cause damage or injury to joints or muscles.

## What should I do if I think muscles have been overstretched?

If you think that you have over-stretched, then stop your exercises and seek advice from your GP or physiotherapist.

### 1. Hip and knee

Bring the knee up to your chest and hold for 20 to 30 seconds.

Repeat the exercise on your other leg.



## 2. Hamstrings

**a.** Sit with your legs straight in front of you.

Lean forwards from the waist, keeping your back straight.

Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.



**b.** With one leg straight on the bed, aim to bring your opposite ankle over your knee.

Lean forwards and gently push down over your bent knee.

Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.



### 3. Calf and achilles

Sit with your legs out in front of you and hook a scarf or something similar around the ball of your foot.

If you are able to safely balance you can also gently lean backwards pulling your foot towards you.

Hold for 20 to 30 seconds and repeat on your other leg.



### 4. Adductors

Bend your knees and cross your ankles.

Lean forwards gently pushing down on your knees.



## 5. Hip flexors / abdominals

**a.** Lie on your front and slowly raise your chest off the bed using your arms.

Your arms can be straight or bent. Having your arms straight will give you the biggest stretch.

Hold for 20 to 30 seconds.



**b.** Position yourself on your back with your legs hanging over the edge of the bed.



**Note.** Regular standing will stretch all of the above muscles and joints, and could also help to decrease your spasticity.

## Individual comments:

If you have any questions or concerns please contact us on:

**0114 271 5680** or **0114 271 5674**

## **Physiotherapy Department**

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