

# Spinal injuries hydrotherapy

**i** Information for patients  
Therapy Services



**PROUD TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE**

SHEFFIELD TEACHING HOSPITALS NHS FOUNDATION TRUST



Your named therapist has referred you for a hydrotherapy session.

## **What is hydrotherapy?**

Hydrotherapy involves exercising in warm water at a temperature of 34 to 37°C. The warmth can help to reduce pain and muscle spasm, making movement easier. The ability to float in water reduces the amount of weight going through your limbs and can be used to assist movement (to increase range) or to resist movement (to make muscles stronger). Some research also suggests that walking can be improved by hydrotherapy in patients with incomplete spinal cord injury.

Whilst in the pool, you will receive treatment from a physiotherapist who will be aware of your overall therapy goals and who will discuss with you the aims and treatment plan for your pool sessions. These might include: decreasing the stiffness in your muscles, stretching to gain range of movement, strengthening exercises, walking practice, or swimming to increase your fitness. We hope to be able to give you the opportunity of developing skills and techniques that you may be able to use if you go to a swimming pool following your discharge.

Following your initial session with the physiotherapist you may go on to have sessions with a physiotherapy technician or assistant.

We aim to give you at least one session every 2 weeks, but this may vary depending on service demand and staffing, as well as your goals for hydrotherapy.

## **What should I bring with me?**

- Any inhalers or GTN sprays that you may need when exercising.
- You must provide your own suitable swimming costume / swimming shorts.
- Any shower gels / soaps / shampoos you would like to use after your session. There is no need to bring towels; we can provide them.

- No jewellery, including watches, should be worn in the pool.
- Please do not bring any valuables to the pool.
- Please ensure the nursing staff have provided you with any dressings required, e.g. for suprapubic catheters. Any small wounds / cuts / grazes must be covered by appropriate dressings; please speak to the nursing staff and inform the therapist about these before entering the pool.

## **What else do I need to do before hydrotherapy?**

- You must have some breakfast on the morning of your pool session and drink plenty afterwards to replace lost fluids. Water will be provided.
- You will need to be on a controlled bowel regime before using the pool.
- You should not attend if you have had a bladder, bowel or stomach upset in the 48 hours before your pool session.
- If you feel that you have not had an adequate bowel movement on the morning of your session, please do not attend. Any bowel accidents in the pool result in it being closed for a significant period of time. If in doubt, do not attend and inform the therapist as soon as possible.
- If you do self-intermittent catheters, we recommend that you perform one before you come down for your pool session.
- If you have an open wound please check with the nursing staff before attending. We may need to postpone your session until your wound has healed.
- If you are unable to attend your session please let the therapy department know as soon as possible as someone else may be able to take your session.

## How long will the session last?

Your treatment in the pool will last for approximately 45 minutes. However your time in the department may be up to 1 hour 30 minutes in total to allow for showering and dressing after your session.



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