



Exercise programme

INFORMATION FOR
PATIENTS

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Message from the NKF



Message from the NKF

When patients are diagnosed with chronic kidney disease (CKD), they are generally well informed by their healthcare professional about what to expect in terms of treatment for their condition or the need for regular dialysis visits.

It is important to remember, however, that many aspects of managing kidney disease can be instigated by the patient themselves. For example, for many patients it is vital that they keep as active as possible to minimise the effects of muscle wasting that can have a devastating effect on their quality of life. Much of this, patients should be encouraged to do for themselves.

However, in order for the patient to manage their own condition as best as possible, renal units need to be able to educate individual patients and encourage them to take control of their condition. The National Kidney Federation fully supports the launch of the *time* programme as a valuable resource that renal units can use to achieve this goal, working hand in hand to empower their patients to become involved in their renal care.

Patient education, motivation and empowerment will ultimately prove to be the best way to improve patients' long-term outcomes and overall wellbeing.



Timothy Statham
Chief Executive
National Kidney Federation (NKF)

Foreword



Foreword

Muscle wasting and weakness are present in nearly everyone with kidney failure. The effects of these are made worse with increasing age and diseases in addition to kidney failure. These conditions, together with stays in hospital, lead to people becoming less and less able to cope with the tasks of daily life. Eventually they may find it difficult to live independent lives.

There is a lot of evidence to suggest that rehabilitation interventions in people on dialysis or with other stages of chronic kidney disease are associated with improvements in physical functioning and strength. Despite this, there are very few programmes of routine rehabilitation for kidney patients in the UK.

The exercise component of the *time* programme is aimed at informing and empowering the multi-disciplinary renal care team and their patients to regard physical rehabilitation as an integral part of the routine treatment package for all people with renal failure. It provides the means for them to raise awareness and to initiate a simple programme of exercises to improve flexibility, balance and muscle strength that is applicable to chronic kidney disease, peritoneal and haemodialysis patients. Examples of formal and individually defined assessments of the effects of increased physical activity are given.



Dr Patrick Naish, Consultant Nephrologist
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Introduction

Introduction

Exercise is an important part of managing your condition, and can help you to achieve better health during your treatment. The benefits of exercise are widely reported and include:

- Increased energy levels
- Increased physical function
- Increased quality of life and decreased depression
- Less cramping during dialysis
- Increased efficiency of dialysis

Regular exercise can help to increase your flexibility, stamina and improve the strength of your heart muscles. This leads to increased energy levels, better sleep, and an overall increase in your feeling of well-being. Even if you feel unable to exercise due to tiredness you will often have more energy after completing an exercise programme.

You should ensure that you have consulted your doctor before attempting any of the exercises outlined in this programme. As with any exercise programme, you should stop immediately if you feel faint, dizzy, unwell or experience chest pain and you should contact your doctor or a nurse.

Can I exercise?

All of this information and exercise in the *time* programme is aimed at informing and encouraging you to consider being more physically active and able. Your nurses and doctors are part of this programme and will provide you with detailed guidance and support. In the meantime you can also check the list below to see if you should be exercising.

Patients who should and should not exercise

Patients who should exercise	Patients who should not exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients who are stable during dialysis treatment • Patients whose health problems, beyond kidney failure, are well controlled • Patients with stable heart problems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Patients with uncontrolled cardiac profiles, angina at rest, or who have had a cardiac event in the past 6 weeks • Patients who are breathless at rest and have visible swelling from too much fluid • Patients who are haemodynamically unstable during dialysis • Patients with symptomatic bone disease • Patients with a body temperature of above 38°C (101.0°F) or another acute infection • Patients with poor diabetic control • Patients with uncontrolled hypertension or hypotension – caution should be taken if a patients resting blood pressure just before exercising is >160/100 or <100/60.



How to use

How to use

About *time*

The *time* programme is an information resource for people with kidney disease. It aims to promote greater understanding about kidney disease and about the treatments that people with kidney disease receive. The *time* programme also hopes to provide tips and guidance about what you can do to improve your experience as a kidney disease patient. The word *time* has been chosen as the title for this programme because, with a little time and focus, great gains can be made.

This programme has been developed by healthcare professionals and patient representatives. The materials that are available to you as part of this programme are described in more detail below.

Please ask the staff in your kidney unit if you have any questions about the programme and/or any of the information in it, as they have been trained to know about the *time* programme and are available to offer assistance in any way they can.

time exercise programme

The *time* exercise programme highlights the benefits of physical activity and guides you through some exercises designed specifically for people with kidney disease.

The following guide briefly explains the materials that are available in the exercise programme and how they may be used. If you are interested in seeing any of the materials outlined here, please speak to the staff in your renal unit.

Posters

The posters are designed to let people know about the *time* programme and start them thinking about exercise.



Flashcards

The key messages in the exercise programme are presented on flashcards. You might see the flashcard books present in the renal ward. They are designed to give clear and consistent messages in a short space of time. In addition to the key message, each flashcard shows a frequently asked question, the answer to which is revealed on the back of the card.



Patient information manual

This guide contains more detailed information than the flashcards. It will be kept on the ward so that you can read it during your treatment visits. This guide also contains suggested exercises that you can carry out both on and off dialysis.



Healthcare professional information manual

There is also a guide for kidney unit staff so that they know what is contained in the *time* programme and how to assist you with any of the suggested activities.

Exercise on dialysis card

The exercise on dialysis card shows you seven simple exercises that can be done whilst you are on dialysis. The card also gives handy hints about when and how to exercise, and how to build an exercise programme.



Exercising on dialysis progress chart

You, or a member of staff, can record your progress in the exercise programme on the exercising on dialysis progress chart if you wish. There is space on the sheet for each of the seven exercises, including how many were done and the amount of effort (or exertion) used to complete them. Each sheet is designed to be filled out over a period of 4 weeks. You should review your exercise regimen with a member of staff each time you begin a new sheet.



Exercise diary

The exercise diary is designed for you to keep. It contains a guide to the exercises in the programme so you can carry on doing the exercises at home. At the back of the diary, you can monitor your progress by setting personal goals (e.g. aiming to climb your stairs at home or walk around the block). You may choose to monitor your progress with your nurse using a regular questionnaire, called DASI.





The DASI patient questionnaire and score sheet

The DASI (Duke Activity Status Index) is a scale to measure the level of activity in your daily life by asking 12 'yes or no' questions. Your nurse will assess your answers and give you the DASI score which can be recorded in your exercise diary. Changes in your DASI score can be used to monitor your progress with the exercise programme.



The rate of perceived exertion scale (RPE)

This scale monitors how much effort you use to complete an exercise or activity. You are asked to rate the way you feel when exercising on a numbered scale. This is explained more in the Planning & Monitoring section of this guide.



Ankle weights

If, as you progress, you are finding the exercises in the programme too easy, ankle weights are available for you to use. These come in two weights, 0.5 kg and 1 kg. The exercise on dialysis card shows how you can use these as your strength improves.

Key messages



Key points

The key points that you should understand when discussing the importance of exercise with your nurse are:

1. Regular exercise will improve your ability to increase your daily life activities
2. Regular exercise may help you to maintain or improve your independence
3. Regular exercise can improve mood and decrease anxiety and depression
4. Regular exercise can help to improve heart function, health and build basic muscular strength
5. Most people on any form of dialysis can do some form of exercise
6. Side effects of exercise on dialysis patients are very rare
7. Exercise can be done on dialysis and away from dialysis
8. You should aim to exercise at least three times a week, building up from small amounts of time, towards at least 30 minutes each session
9. Seeing small improvements can help motivation
10. Setting realistic goals is key
11. Exercise whilst on haemodialysis may help improve your dialysis adequacy

Getting started



Starting your exercise programme

Before you start your increased activity programme please speak to your nurse and your doctor to ensure that it is safe and appropriate for you.

Make sure that you:

- have good blood pressure control
- are free from any conditions that may prevent you exercising
- have good control of your blood glucose levels if you are diabetic



Your clothing and trainers

It is important to dress appropriately when exercising. Clothes should be cotton, loose fitting and comfortable, and should not restrict your movement. Avoid tight fitting clothing which may make exercise uncomfortable, and can lead to unnecessary sweating and fluid loss.

Your shoes or trainers should have a good grip to prevent you slipping, and should be big enough to accommodate any swelling of your feet. If you are diabetic it is particularly important that you wear high quality, cushioned trainers with good padding and arch support. Do not wear new trainers for long periods of time in case you develop blisters; you should break in your shoes gradually.



Diet and fluid management

Exercise may affect your fluid and nutrient balance. Sweating can help to remove excess fluid from your body; however, exercise can also increase thirst. It is essential that you do not increase your fluid intake as this can lead to fluid overload. If you are finding that exercise makes you excessively thirsty you should reduce the intensity of your exercise until you feel more comfortable. You should not increase your fluid allowance for the day without consulting your nurse and your nephrologist first.



Dietary restrictions still apply even if you are exercising. If in doubt you should speak to your nurse or doctor for further advice.



Tips for succeeding Commitment

It is important to commit yourself to leading a healthier lifestyle before you begin this exercise programme. You do not have to commit to a big change in lifestyle or a rigorous exercise programme; by making a few simple changes to your everyday routine you can increase the amount of exercise you do in a day dramatically:

Tips for leading a healthier lifestyle

Tips for leading a healthier lifestyle include:

- Walk instead of taking the car for short journeys
- Carry out small tasks or lift small weights whilst sitting
- Walk around whilst speaking on the telephone
- Get off buses one stop early and walk the remainder of your journey
- Use stairs instead of lifts or escalators whenever possible
- Go for a walk in your lunch hour at work
- Take regular walks in the evenings with friends or family members.

Realistic expectations

One day of activity will not have noticeable results in the same way that a more sustained period of activity would. Once you have made the decision to exercise you should commit to a healthier lifestyle for a longer time period (1-3 months) and see if you notice the difference in that time.

When planning your exercise programme you should bear in mind the following points which may otherwise hinder progress.

- You will find some exercises easier than others to begin with. The difficult exercises will become easier with time so it is worth persevering with these
- You might have to miss some exercise sessions if you are not feeling well, or have other appointments. Reschedule these exercise sessions as soon as you are able to and continue with the programme. Do not use this as a reason to stop exercising
- You may feel more tired straight after you exercise than before. This is only temporary and can be followed by an increase in energy levels later on in the day
- It can take a few weeks before you notice the difference in how you feel every day. However, it is worth persevering to improve your long term well being



Planning and monitoring





Planning an exercise programme

Every person has different exercising needs and capabilities, and the *time* programme is designed to reflect this. It is important that you speak with your doctor or nurse when planning your exercise programme to ensure that it is suitable for you.

How often should I exercise?

This will depend on your fitness and strength levels before you exercise, and also on any other conditions you may have. Most patients are able to carry out all of exercises every day if they wish to.

How long should I exercise for?

If you have not exercised previously you should start with small 5-minute sessions and gradually build up to longer sessions of 30 minutes or more over time. This period should include a warm-up and a cool-down session to minimise any risk of muscle damage.

How can I measure my progress?

To keep yourself motivated it is important to measure your progress. You can do this in a number of ways, including keeping a record of the time you take to complete a particular exercise, or the distance you can walk in a particular time frame. Measure this at the beginning of every month to see the difference over time.



A good way to keep track of your progress is to keep an exercise diary. Use this to log which activities you have been carrying out and how easy or difficult you have found these to do.

You can also monitor your progress using the Rating of Perceived Exertion (RPE) Scale to note how your fitness improves over time.

Rate of Perceived Exertion		
6	Rest	
7	Very, Very Light	
8	Very Light	Warm-Up and Cool-Down
9		
10	Fairly Light	
11		
12	Somewhat Hard	
13		
14	Hard	
15		
16		
17	Very Hard	Slow Down!
18		
19	Very, Very Hard	
20		

Exercise is usually undertaken at RPE levels of between 12 and 16. The aim of the exercise programme is to work at the same level of RPE throughout the exercise session (not including warm-up and cool-down). This will mean that as your fitness improves, you will be able to exercise more at the same level of perceived exertion.

Things to be aware of

As with any new activity, there are a few things you should be aware of:

- Avoid extremes of temperature. If it is very hot or very cold, you should not exercise outside.
- Do not exercise if:
 - You have a fever (over 38°C, 101.0°F)
 - You have missed a dialysis session
 - You have an untreated illness
 - You experience chest pain
 - You have poor diabetic control
 - You have uncontrolled high or very low blood pressure
 - You are breathless at rest with swollen legs or hands from too much fluid
 - You have had a heart problem within the last six weeks
- You should slow down when exercising if:
 - You feel very tired or not able to continue
 - You are too breathless to talk whilst exercising
 - Your muscles become so sore that you cannot exercise the next day
 - You do not feel fully recovered after 1 hour
 - You have an unusually high heart rate



A tip to help you to assess the difficulty of your activity:

- If you can complete a sentence in one breath, the activity is too easy or low intensity for you
- If you are unable to say the same sentence at all, the activity is too difficult or high intensity for you
- You should be able to complete the sentence by taking breaths in between words

Exercise on dialysis



Exercises to carry out on dialysis

The following exercises can be carried out whilst you are on the dialysis machines. The safest times for you to carry out these exercises are the second and third hours after dialysis has started. It is important to maintain good posture at all times during these exercises, and that you breathe regularly as you complete them. Breathe out during the difficult part and breathe in during the easy part of the exercise. You should sit with your back straight and, where appropriate, well supported on your dialysis chair and keep the parts of your body that are not exercising as still as possible.

Over time you should aim to build up the intensity of these exercises.

1. You should start without any weights and repeat each of the exercises as many times as you can manage
2. You should then progress to completing a set of 10-15 repetitions
3. Once you are comfortable with this you should aim to progress to 3 sets of 10-15 repetitions
4. Once you are able to do this comfortably you can then progress to adding 0.5 kg weights to each leg and follow the above steps again
5. Once you complete steps 1-3 with 0.5 kg weights, you can progress to completing them with 1 kg weights instead.

You should begin your exercise programme with 5 minutes of warm-up exercises. These can be a low intensity version of the exercises you are about to carry out, without any weights.



Exercise 1: Heel raises

1. Sit towards the front of your dialysis chair with your back straight and your knees bent at 90°
2. Lift your heel up and then lower it back down slowly
3. Repeat with the other leg

When you progress to adding weights to this exercise, you should have the weight resting on the knees and not around the ankles



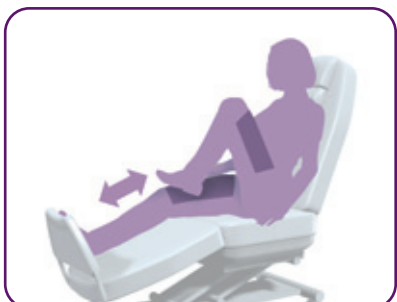
Exercise 2: Ankle flex

1. Sit on dialysis chair with your back well supported
2. Raise one leg straight out in front of you
3. Flex your foot so that your toes are pointing towards the ceiling
4. Slowly point your toes down and then flex up again
5. Return your leg to original position
6. Repeat with the other leg



Exercise 3: Knee extension

1. Sit towards the front of your dialysis chair with your feet on the floor
2. Straighten one leg so that it is out in front of you
3. Keep your toes pointing up towards the ceiling
4. Slowly bend your leg back and place your foot back on the floor
5. Repeat with the other leg



Exercise 4: Knee to chest lifts

1. Sit on dialysis chair with your back well supported
2. Bring one knee up to the chest and lower slowly
3. Repeat with the other leg



Exercise 5: Outer thigh lift

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Slowly move one leg sideways away from your body by 30-40°, concentrating on the muscles of your outer thigh
3. Return leg to original position
4. Repeat with the other leg



Exercise 6: Front thigh lift

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Roll up a towel and place this under your knee
3. Slowly lift your foot up and place back down again
4. Repeat with the other leg



Exercise 7: Straight leg raise

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Straighten your leg
3. Slowly lift your leg up by 30-40° and place back down again
4. Repeat with the other leg

You should end your exercise programme with 5 minutes of cool-down exercises. These can be a low intensity version of the exercises you have just completed, without any weights.

Exercise off dialysis

Exercises to carry out away from dialysis

All of the information and exercises found in this section can be found to take home with you in the exercise diary, provided with this programme. Ask your nurse for further information and explanation on how to use the diary.

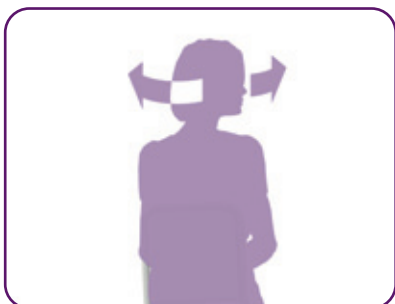
It is important that you maintain good posture at all times during these exercises, and breathe regularly as you complete them. You should sit with your back straight and well supported in your dialysis chair and keep the parts of your body that are not exercising as still as possible.

As with the exercises on dialysis, you should aim to build up the intensity of these exercises:

1. You should start without any weights and repeat each of the exercises as many times as you can manage
2. You should then progress to completing a set of 10-15 repetitions
3. Once you are comfortable with this you can should aim to progress to three sets of 10-15 repetitions
4. Once you are able to do this comfortably you can then progress to adding 0.5 kg weights to each leg and follow the above steps again
5. Once you complete steps 1-3 with 0.5 kg weights, you can progress to completing them with 1 kg weights instead.

You should take care to breathe properly and to make sure you do not hold your breath during the exercises. Breathe out during the difficult part and breathe in during the easy part of the exercise.

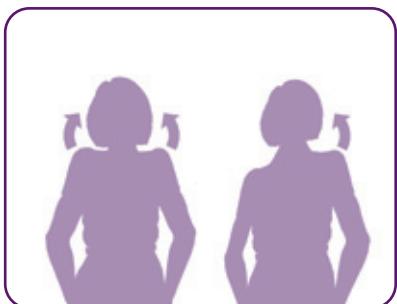
You should begin your exercise programme with 5 minutes of warm-up exercises. These can be a low intensity version of the exercises you are about to carry out, without any weights, or you can look out for the exercises labelled as 'warm-up or cool-down exercises'. The exercises labelled 'conditioning exercises' are good exercises for building up stamina, and muscular strength during your exercise routine.



Warm-up or cool-down exercise

Exercise 1: Neck stretch

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Look straight ahead
3. Slowly look up towards the ceiling, moving your whole head
4. Slowly look down towards the floor, moving your whole head
5. Look straight ahead again
6. Slowly move your head to look over your left shoulder
7. Repeat to your right side
8. Look straight ahead again
9. Tip your head towards your left shoulder, keeping your head facing forwards the whole time
10. Repeat to your right side



Warm-up or cool-down exercise

Exercise 2: Shoulder shrug and rotation

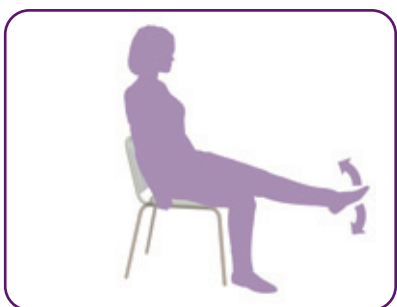
1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Shrug your shoulders up to your ears
3. Hold for a few seconds
4. Lower and repeat
5. Make forward circles with your right shoulder
6. Repeat with your left shoulder
7. Make backwards circles with your right shoulder
8. Repeat with your left shoulder



Warm-up or cool-down exercise

Exercise 3: Trunk rotation

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Cross your arms and raise so that your elbows are pointing out straight in front of you
3. Keeping your nose inline with your watchstrap, twist your body to the left of you
4. Return to a forward facing position
5. Repeat towards your right



Warm-up or cool-down exercise

Exercise 4: Ankle flex

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Raise one leg straight out in front of you
3. Flex your foot so that your toes are pointing towards the ceiling
4. Slowly point your toes down and then flex up again
5. Return leg to original position
6. Repeat with the other leg



Warm-up or cool-down exercise

Exercise 5: Calf stretch

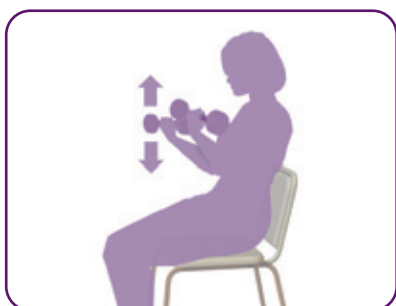
1. Stand up with your back straight using the back of a chair for support
2. Step back with your right leg only
3. Press your right heel into the floor
4. Bend your left leg slightly, so that you can feel the stretch in your right calf
5. Hold the stretch in your leg
6. Repeat with the other leg



Conditioning exercise

Exercise 6: Stair step

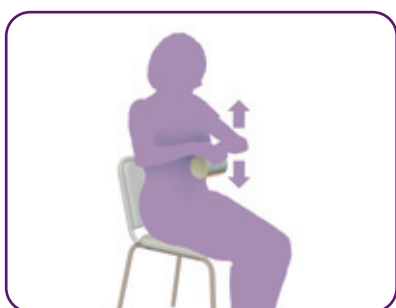
1. Stand up with your back straight, facing a small step
2. Balance yourself carefully e.g. use a wall
3. Step onto the step with your right foot, and then with your left
4. Slowly step back down off the step with your right foot, and then your left
5. Repeat stepping with your left foot before your right



Conditioning exercise

Exercise 7: Arm curl

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Keep your elbows close to your sides
3. With your palms facing up, make your hands into fists
4. Slowly lift one fist up to your shoulder
5. Lower slowly
6. Repeat with the other arm



Conditioning exercise

Exercise 8: Upright row

1. Sit on a chair with your back well supported
2. Place a single weight on your lap
3. Pick this up with both hands, with palms facing downwards
4. Slowly raise your arms, keeping the weight as close to your body as possible and pointing your elbows outwards
5. Lower slowly



Conditioning exercise

Exercise 9: Knee extension

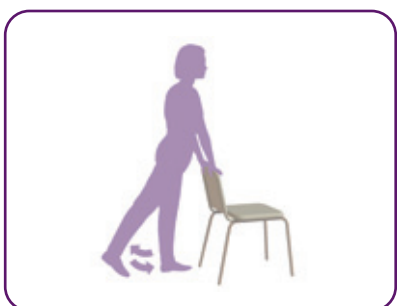
1. Sit towards the front of your chair with your feet on the floor
2. Straighten one leg so that it is out in front of you
3. Keep your toes pointing up towards the ceiling
4. Slowly bend your leg back and place your foot back on the floor
5. Repeat with the other leg



Conditioning exercise

Exercise 10: Sit-to-Stand

1. Stand in front of a chair, facing away from it. Make sure that the chair cannot move backwards at all
2. Cross your arms in front of your body
3. Move down into the chair as though you are going to sit down on it, but stop before you do it
4. Hold your position just above the chair seat
5. Stand back up so that you are upright again



Conditioning exercise

Exercise 11: Back leg swing

1. Stand up with your back straight using the back of a chair for support
2. Slowly lift one leg backwards and point your toes outwards
3. Take care not to arch your back
4. Lower your leg back down onto the floor
5. Repeat with the other leg

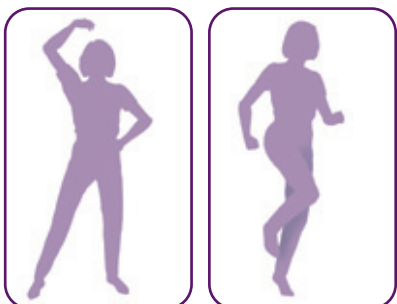


Conditioning exercise

Exercise 12: Heel raise

1. Stand up with your back straight using the back of a chair for support
2. Lift your heels up so that you are standing on the balls of your feet
3. Lower your heels back down slowly

You can intersperse the exercises with half star jumps, and with running on the spot for one minute bursts. This helps to break up the exercises a little.



Half star jumps

1. Stand with your back straight and your hands on your hips
2. Move your right arm sideways and up so that it is over your head
3. At the same time, step sideways with your right leg
4. Return arm and leg to original position
5. Repeat with your left arm and leg

Running on the spot

1. Stand with your back straight
2. Run on spot for one minute, at an intensity that you can manage



You should end your exercise programme with 5 minutes of cool-down exercises. These can be a low intensity version of the exercise you have just completed, without any weights, or you can look out for the exercises labelled as 'warm-up or cool-down exercises'.

If you do not have the time to complete all of these exercises at home, you should do as many of them as you feel comfortable with, taking care to ensure that you are exercising different muscle groups and not focusing on one area only.



Keeping with it



Keeping with it

Tips for keeping with the programme

Once you have started your exercise programme you are halfway there. In order to keep exercising you should make sure you are motivated and ready for the challenge. Once you are established in an exercise routine you will notice the rewards to your health each day.

- Measure your progress regularly. Ask your nurse for a copy of the exercise diary and fill this in each time you exercise
- Choose exercises you enjoy. If you prefer walking to weight training, make this a larger part of your routine
- Exercise with friends. Exercise can be a fun, social activity rather than a chore
- Take part in team sports. These can vary in intensity from 5-a-side football teams to swimming or even golfing teams. The competitive element can often be a great motivator

Success stories



Success stories

Mary

Mary is a 56-year-old grandmother with a part-time job at a local bakery. She began dialysis five years ago and has had an exercise routine for over half of that time.

“When I first began on dialysis I was devastated. I was tired all of the time and not sure I could cope with coming in for dialysis as well as continuing to work part-time and see my grandchildren.

The nurses at the renal unit encouraged me to take some exercise, and even spoke to my husband about encouraging and supporting me to do this. I was convinced that it would not work for me; I was simply too tired to walk never mind anything else.

But I am so glad I gave it a try. I began with short 5-minute walks each day to the post-box, and then extended this by 5-10 minutes every week. Before I knew it I was walking for half an hour twice a day; once in the morning after breakfast and once in the evening with my husband. I now also walk to work. Even my husband is at it and we are going to take some swimming lessons in the summer.”

Arthur

Arthur is a 79-year-old ex-gardener who has been having dialysis for nearly 10 years. His wife Mary is a retired housekeeper who accompanies him on his visits to the dialysis unit.

“I first experienced kidney problems just before my 70th birthday. The grandkids had been over for a barbeque and I just didn’t feel right all that week. At first I thought it might have been something I ate, but eventually my son insisted on taking me to hospital to get me checked out. And so here I am, 10 years later, still on dialysis.

My nurses are ever so good. They take care of me, set up my equipment and make sure I am comfortable for my session. One of them will even fetch me a newspaper if I ask nicely. And if not, then Mary gets me one so I can read peacefully for a while.

It’s only been a few weeks since I started exercising at home after my dialysis sessions. My wife had been speaking to one of the nurses about it, and nagged me into it. I couldn’t see the point of it myself – an old man, trying to get himself young again. Anyway, I have been taking things easy – started with short walks to the Post Office and back, and then longer walks to the local park. I tried to walk the neighbour’s dog one time but that was too difficult for me; maybe I’ll try that again later.

But I have noticed the difference. I sleep better at night, and this gives me more energy during the day. My dialysis appointments aren’t nearly so tiring to get to, and I feel like I am 20 years younger again.”

Rajesh

Rajesh is a 44-year-old father of two. He works as a mechanic and has been on dialysis for two years.

“As a teenager, I saw my dad go through dialysis for many years, so I thought I would be able to cope with it when I was diagnosed with kidney failure. I guess I was a little too arrogant and thought I knew it all. After all, I had read lots about the condition as I was growing up.

But it was a real shock to me when I started dialysis. I couldn’t believe how painful it was. My doctor told me I had something called ‘Steal Syndrome’; something to do with my blood not flowing properly through my fistula. It was so painful, I really began to dread coming in for dialysis sessions and my children could also see how distressed I was getting. I really didn’t want them to see me like that.

I noticed that the pain eased if I had been working at the garage a lot before dialysis – I don’t know, maybe this strengthened my fistula. So I started to exercise on the days before I came in for dialysis, hoping it would help to ease the pain. It really did the trick. I now exercise three or four times a week, mostly just playing football or going swimming with the kids. It’s definitely improved how I feel when I am on dialysis and the kids get a much more relaxed and happy dad at home too”.

Greg

Greg is a 28-year-old student who experienced kidney failure just over a year ago. He has been on dialysis since then, and has been exercising over the last 10 months.

“I couldn’t believe it when the doctor told me that my kidneys were failing. I had just got married that spring, and Lucy and I had been decorating our new house, and even thinking about having children soon. My diagnosis changed all of that and we had to put all of our plans on hold. It was hard work, and Lucy and I argued a lot about the future, and coping with the disease.

I wouldn’t have snapped out of it if it wasn’t for her. Lucy read up about dialysis, and the benefits that exercise might have on my depression. She didn’t tell me at first, she just asked me to do little chores for her, walking to the shops and helping with the decorating. Now I exercise four times a week at the gym, and also keep myself as active as I can each day. I can really feel the difference to my health and energy levels. My relationship with Lucy is much better now that I am content and have more energy to face the future.”

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