

RECOVERING AFTER VIRAL ILLNESS

Information pack – fatigue, sleep and exercise.

This handout will aid you with your recovery following viral illness, or a prolonged stay in hospital

Symptoms can vary from person to person and can range from mild to severe in nature. They include:

- Breathing problems
- Muscle weakness
- Fatigue
- Loss of appetite
- Sleeping problems
- Cognitive (thinking) problems
- Mood changes

In this handout, there is specific advice about managing **fatigue, sleep, breathing and exercise**. For other advice, you can visit the following websites

Dietary: www.ageuk.org.uk/salford/about-us/improving-nutrition-and-hydration/

Breathing: <https://www.stchristophers.org.uk/videos/managing-breathlessness/>

If you have any concerns, please contact either your GP or the NHS 111 website

www.111.nhs.uk

Pacing Your Activity

After viral illness it is very easy to get into a habit of “boom/bust” activity. By this we mean doing lots of activities on one day and then very few the next day due to an increased level of fatigue. Avoiding this pattern of behaviour will help to reduce both the number and severity of bad days you experience. Gaining consistency and establishing a routine and structure to individual tasks, days or the whole week in general are key components of pacing well.

1. **Stop or reduce activity before the onset of fatigue** - otherwise the symptoms are in control and not you.
2. **Avoid prolonged rest/ inactivity** - even if it is a modified amount, try and do a positive action on a bad day. Remember to try and acknowledge this positive behavioural choice.
3. **Accept you will have to place boundaries around your activity levels** - this will require you to first establish a routine and then to attach boundaries (time, distance, intensity) to all your activities. This will be frustrating! Remember, this does not mean these limitations will always be at this level. Once you are managing a consistent baseline level of activity you can look to gradually extend the boundary you have set.
4. **Place equal emphasis on physical, cognitive (thinking) and social goals** - mental fatigue is as tiring as physical fatigue.
5. **Use activity diaries to:**
 - i. Structure and plan your individual activities, overall days or the whole week.
 - ii. Reflect on the demands of existing or new activities.

Key Messages: Aim for a consistent level of activity in order to limit the number of bad days you experience

This involves holding back on the good days and doing more on the bad days

Using An Activity Diary

What to Record

Record all physical, cognitive (thinking) and social activities

Also record any periods of rest, relaxation or sleep

It is easier to complete the diary retrospectively initially (following the activity). Ideally, the diary will eventually be used as a planner to allow you to structure in your goals or planned activities

Rating Fatigue Levels

F= Fatigue

Rate these symptoms on a scale of 0-10 (0 = “no fatigue” and 10 = “the most fatigue imaginable”)

You don't have to rate every box - try and complete the scales 3 or 4 times/ day, particularly following a new activity

It may be useful to calculate an average score of fatigue for the day (add up your total fatigue scores and divide by the number of times you completed the scale that day)

It may also be useful to make a note at the bottom of each day whether your sleep quality was the same, better or worse than your current normal level

You can also use the diary to rate pain levels, if this is a problem.

Key Messages: Activity diaries have been shown to be useful to analyse the impact of current or new activities on your symptoms.

More effective use of the diary involves using them to plan your days/ weeks in advance to ensure a consistent baseline level.

You may want to design a diary for what you'd like your week to be like in the future- you can set goals in a graded manner to work towards this.

ACTIVITY DIARY

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY
7AM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
9AM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
11AM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
1PM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
3PM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
5PM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
7PM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
9PM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
11PM				
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
AVERAGE FATIGUE	/10	/10	/10	/10

ACTIVITY DIARY

	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
7AM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
9AM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
11AM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
1PM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
3PM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
5PM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
7PM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
9PM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
11PM			
	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10	FATIGUE /10
AVERAGE FATIGUE	/10	/10	/10

SLEEPING

1. Try to establish a regular sleep pattern

Set the time you wake up using an alarm clock every day

Go to bed at regular times every day. Turn the light out soon after going to bed.

(It is important that you go to bed when you feel tired but not completely exhausted)

2. Keep a sleep diary

Make a note of the time you go to bed, the time you actually fall asleep and when you are wake up.

Calculate the length of time you have been asleep, rather than the amount of time you have been in bed.

Note how many times your sleep was disturbed and if you had to get up.

Once you have calculated the average amount of time you are actually asleep for, try to get up out of bed after this time.

3. Get up out of bed if you are not sleeping

If you are struggling to fall asleep in bed, get up after 20-30 minutes and leave the bedroom. Try a relaxing activity and return to bed only when you feel sleepy. Do not wait until you are exhausted. Repeat this action until you have fallen asleep.

4. Daytime Sleep

This reduces the quality of your night-time sleep.

If you normally sleep during the day try to decrease the length of the sleep gradually. Use an alarm clock to time the sleeps.

5. Exercise

Exercise during the day will help 'tire' the body in preparation for a good sleep. Try not to exercise up to 3 hours before sleeping as exercise will awaken the body.

Get natural daylight during the day.

6. Diet

Avoid stimulants such as caffeine, chocolate and smoking just before bed.

Eat regularly through the day, and avoid eating straight before going to bed.

Reduce your alcohol intake before bed as alcohol reduces sleep quality.

Warm milky drinks can help sleep.

7. Manage Stress

Try relaxation methods before bed e.g. relaxing music/meditation techniques/warm baths.

Try not to use bedtime as a time to reflect on the day, this should be done before getting into bed. Have a wind-down period of approximately 90 minutes before going to bed.

Use a bedtime routine every night so that these wind-down actions become associated with sleep.

8. Write lists

Try to plan the next day before you retire to bed, otherwise you will start thinking of the following days tasks and worries instead of sleeping. Write down things you have to do before going to bed so you don't keep yourself awake trying to remember things.

9. Manage pain

In discussion with your GP, medication may be beneficial.

10. Environment

Keep your bedroom a place to go at bed time to sleep.

Avoid watching TV, making phone calls, reading and eating in bed if sleep is a problem.

Ensure your bedroom is clutter free and a relaxing room for sleep. Ensure your bed is comfortable and your bedroom should be quiet, a suitable temperature, dark.

Use ear plugs, eye masks or black out blinds to reduce disturbances.

11. Try not to worry

Easier said than done, but worrying about not sleeping will keep you awake and further disturb sleep. Try to ignore unhelpful thoughts.

DEEP BREATHING EXERCISES

Position:

Sat up in bed or in a chair

Exercise:

Place one hand on your stomach and one hand on your chest.

Take a slow steady breath in as deeply as you can. The hand on your stomach should rise as you breathe in.

Hold the breath for a count of 3.

The hand on your stomach should fall as you breathe out.

Repeat this cycle of breathing 3 times.

RESTING POSITIONS

Below are some useful positions if you are feeling short of breath:



FITNESS EXERCISE PROGRAMMES

Attached are 3 exercise programmes which are designed to help you start to improve your strength, flexibility, balance and cardiovascular fitness.

Try and start with the Level 1 programme, and work at a level you feel you can tolerate initially. The repetitions are for guidance, but try and achieve 10 if you can. Aim to do these daily, although they can be performed 2-3 times per day if you feel able.

Progress to level 2 once you feel you are tolerating Level 1 well. It will vary from person to person how long this will take, but do not worry if you do not feel ready to progress for a week or two, continuing with Level 1 will still help improve your fitness.

If you feel significantly fatigued, or have poor mobility, there is also chair based exercise programme attached, which can be a good starting point. You can progress in a similar fashion to Level 1 once you feel able.

If you require exercises for a specific part of your body, you can access exercise videos and printable exercise sheets at www.pat.nhs.uk/physio.

If you have any concerns about the exercises, or your progress, you can speak to a physiotherapist at North Manchester General Hospital on 0161 720 2321.

LEVEL 1 EXERCISES



Personal exercise program

Level 1 Exercises

Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Physiotherapy Department

Provided by NMGH 2
Provided for



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March on the spot for 30-60 seconds.



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Stand tall, holding weights in front of your hips. (Use tins of beans if you don't have weights)

Lift weights to chest level, leading the movement with your elbows pointing outwards. Lower down in a controlled manner.

Repeat 10 times.



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Sit on a chair with your hands on the supports. If needed, move yourself forwards on the chair so that your feet are securely supported on the floor. One foot is slightly further back.

Shift your weight forwards and push up to standing, using arm supports as much as needed.

Repeat 10 times.



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Lie on your back, with knees bent and feet hip-width apart.

Lift your bottom off the floor/bed.

Repeat 10 times.



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Stand on one leg for 30 seconds.

Use support as necessary.

Repeat 10 times.



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Step up and down on your bottom step. Use support as necessary.

Repeat 10 times.



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On all fours, hands under your shoulders and knees under your hips.



Reach one arm under the other armpit and then bring the arm back and reach towards the ceiling.

Repeat 10 times.



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Stand straight with one hand on your hip and the other straight up.

Bend to the side with opposite arm reaching overhead. Keep your pelvis in mid-position.

Repeat 10 times.

LEVEL 2 EXERCISES



Personal exercise program

Level 2 Exercises

Pennine Acute Hospitals NHS Trust
Physiotherapy Department

Provided by NMGH 2
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Jog on the spot for 30-60 seconds.



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Hold weights (or tins of beans) in your hands.

Start with your arms by your side and then lift out to the sides.

Repeat 10 times.



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Sit and stand from a chair without using your hands.

Repeat 10 times.



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Lie on your back with knees bent.

Lift your bottom off the floor/bed. Maintain this position and then straighten one knee.

Repeat 10 times on both legs.



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Stand on one leg with no support for 30 seconds.

Repeat 10 times.



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Step down from your bottom step

Repeat 10 times.



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Crawling position. Hold a weight or tin of beans in your hand.

Bring your arm sideways up as far as possible. Let the head and body turn with the movement.

Repeat 10 times.



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Hold a weight or tin of beans in your hand and lean to one side.

Repeat 10 times.

CHAIR BASED EXERCISES



Provided for:



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Sit on a chair.
Pull your toes up, tighten your thigh muscle and straighten your knee.
Repeat 10 times.



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Sitting on a chair.
Lift your leg up off the seat keeping the knee bent. Return to starting position.
Repeat 10 times.



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Sitting on a chair, back straight.
Clasp the arms of the chair and lift your bottom from the seat by straightening your arms and pushing the shoulders down.
Repeat 10 times.



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Sit with your feet firmly on the floor.
Round your back and bend forward, keeping your neck and shoulders relaxed.
Repeat 10 times.



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Sit on a chair with your hands clasped together.
Lift both arms up above your head.
Repeat 10 times.



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Sit and lift one arm.
Bend to the side with your arm reaching over your head. Breathe in, then breathe out and return to the starting position.
Repeat 10 times.