



# Tips for keeping fit and well while waiting for your treatment or procedure

**This leaflet has been developed by our clinicians to support you to keep active and healthy at home while waiting for your treatment or procedure.**

## Why stay active?

If you are waiting for treatment, being active is one of the best things you can do to look after yourself, as part of a healthy lifestyle. Being active is good for your physical and mental wellbeing and will help you to prepare for and recover from procedures or treatments more quickly. This is why we should all try to move regularly. Taking an active role in planning and preparing for your procedure or treatment will help you to feel in control, leave hospital sooner and get back to normal quicker.

## Tips for getting moving

Being active is safe for the vast majority of people and it has many benefits for your health and wellbeing. There are some small steps you can take to reduce the chance of problems occurring when you are exercising in and around the home.

- 1 Prepare your exercise space by clearing away unnecessary clutter.
- 2 Keep something sturdy and solid nearby for support (for example a kitchen work surface).
- 3 Have a glass of water ready to sip as you exercise.
- 4 Wear well-fitting, supportive shoes that are done up, and comfortable clothing.
- 5 If you are exercising on your own, keep a telephone nearby, just in case you need it.
- 6 Set the pace, start exercise at a level that you find easy and build up gradually.
- 7 If you experience acute or severe pain anywhere or dizziness then stop and rest.
- 8 It is common for muscles to feel a bit stiff for a few days after you have used them – this is a normal response and shows that your body is responding to the increased movement.
- 9 Try not to hold your breath as you exercise, breathe normally throughout.

Most people can exercise without speaking to a doctor first, especially if their medical condition is under control. However, if you get any symptoms from a heart, kidney or metabolic condition you should phone your healthcare professional to check before you start. If you don't feel you can complete any of the exercises please don't worry, just move on to the next one. Just do what you feel comfortable doing!

On the next page are some suggested exercises for you to do, kindly provided with the permission of the We Are Undefeatable Campaign – visit <https://weareundefeatable.co.uk>



# 15 ways to move more at home

Here is a range of activity ideas to help you move more at home throughout the day. Start slowly and build up. Try the warm-up activities first then find the activities that work best for you and your ability level. To make exercises more challenging, use small weights such as water bottles, lift your knees higher, use your arms and jump or hop.

## WARM UP

To **loosen ankles**, sit down and alternate between digging your heel and pointing your toe. To **loosen shoulders**, circle them up to your ears, back and down.



## HAVE FUN BEING ACTIVE

While you're **waiting for the kettle** to boil why not put on your favourite music and **dance** like no-one's watching!



Play **active games** such as kicking a ball around the garden, throw and catch games or play skittles using things from around the house.



## MOVEMENTS YOU CAN DO SEATED OR STANDING

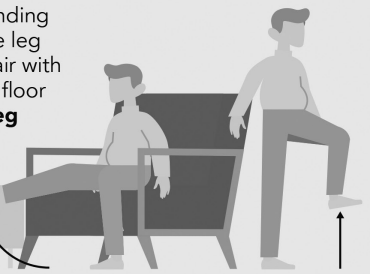
To **stretch your upper body**, clasp your hands above your head and push upwards, gently bend over to each side to stretch the upper body. You can do this standing or seated.



While you're **watching tv**, get a small bottle of water in each hand as weights. For a **bicep curl**, curl your lower arms up to your shoulder and back down. For a **shoulder press** have your hands at shoulder height, and raise your hands above your head and back down.



**Leg or knee raises** can be done standing or sitting. For the leg raise, sit on a chair with both feet on the floor and **bring one leg up** until it's level with the floor and then **back down** again.



## STAY STRONG

**Calf raises** can strengthen your legs - hold on to the back of a chair with your feet flat on the ground. **Stand on your tip toes** and hold for a few seconds before lowering your heels back down.



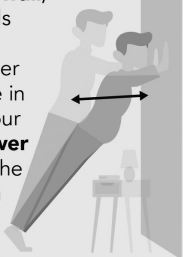
**Squats** are a good exercise for your whole body. Holding onto a chair, ensure your back is straight and feet are hip width apart and **bend at the knees**, as if you're going to sit down. Then **straighten your legs** to stand up straight again.



**Stand up from sitting and back down** again keeping your chest up. Do this as many times as you can. If you're feeling comfortable not to use your hands to help you, **hold a small weight** such as a small bag of sugar to your chest for more effort.



Standing at a slight angle **facing a wall**, have your hands shoulder width apart at shoulder height. Breathe in as you bend your elbows and **lower your body** to the wall, then **push back up**.



## MOVING AROUND YOUR HOME

**Walk around** your garden or home while calling a friend - a **good chat** is great for your mental wellbeing.



When **moving around** your home **try marching**, lifting your knees up as high as they will go; **swing your arms** for more effort. If you want more challenge jog on the spot.



If you've been **sitting for a while** and have steps or stairs at home, try **walking up and down the stairs** or use the bottom stair to step up and down.



If jumping jacks aren't right for you, try **half jacks** instead. **Step to the side** and **raise an arm** at the same time as the stepping leg.



## RELAX WHILE BEING ACTIVE

**Gentle stretches** are good for relaxation, such as **lying on the floor** and gently **bringing the knees up** to the chest. Or **sitting on a chair**, straighten up your back and **gently twist** round to one side and hold for a few seconds; repeat on the other side.



## Looking after your nutrition

Nutrition is important both before and after any procedure. Good nutrition can help you recover more quickly, reduce complications and shorten your length of stay in hospital if you need to be an inpatient. It is important to ensure that you are eating enough calories, protein, vitamins and minerals before any procedure. This will help you to complete the exercises on page 2 and recover from any procedure or treatment quickly.

### Tips for a healthy diet pre-surgery

- Have regular drinks throughout the day to stay hydrated. As a guide aim to have 6–8 glasses of fluid a day.

**Eating a balanced diet will help you prepare for and recover from your procedure. Your diet should include a variety of:**

- fruit and vegetables (fresh, frozen, tinned, dried or juice) – it is important to try to have five per day
- starchy foods (bread, cereals, potatoes or rice) for slow-release energy
- protein (beans, pulses, fish and meat) – this is important to build and preserve muscle
- two portions of fish a week, one of which should be oily as these are a good source of protein
- dairy products – milk, yoghurt, cheese and plant-based alternatives are good sources of calcium which is important for bone health and recovery
- oils and spreads (choose plant-based where possible).

### Try to maintain a healthy weight

It is important that you try to maintain a healthy weight. Being overweight or being underweight is not good for your overall health and can affect your fitness before a procedure or treatment. You can use an online BMI calculator such as the one found here:

[www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator](http://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/bmi-calculator) to help you see if your weight is healthy.

### I am overweight – what does this mean?

Being overweight can increase the risks associated with a procedure or treatment including infections, breathing difficulties and poor wound healing. If you are overweight, losing just a small amount of weight prior to a procedure or treatment can help to reduce some of the risks. These websites and apps may help you achieve this:

- British Dietetic Association: Weight Loss – Food Factsheet  
<https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/weight-loss.html>
- NHS weight loss plan app <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/healthy-weight/start-the-nhs-weight-loss-plan> (available on Google play or apple app store)
- ACE Lifestyle Service website <https://www.acecic.co.uk/my-space/health-and-lifestyle/>

### I am underweight – what does this mean?

Being underweight can increase the risks and slow down your recovery. If you have an underlying condition that has affected how much you eat, your appetite has reduced or you have recently lost weight without trying, speak to your GP for additional advice and a referral to a dietitian.

Information to help you gain some weight while awaiting to see a dietitian can be found at <https://www.malnutritionpathway.co.uk/leaflets-patients-and-carers>



## Vitamin D and calcium

We make vitamin D in our body through exposure to sunlight. Our exposure to sunlight and food sources high in vitamin D can be variable and this can put us at risk of not meeting our daily requirement. It is advisable to take a supplement of 10 micrograms of vitamin D each day. Calcium is important at all ages for strong bones and teeth and is needed in combination with vitamin D. The British Dietetic Association produces factsheets on calcium and vitamin D to help you: <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/calcium.html> and <https://www.bda.uk.com/resource/vitamin-d.html>

There is also information on the government website:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/vitamin-d-supplements-how-to-take-them-safely/vitamin-d-supplements-how-to-take-them-safely>

Some people may be eligible for free calcium supplements, details can be found through this link: <https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/coronavirus-covid-19/people-at-higher-risk/get-vitamin-d-supplements/>

## Controlling existing conditions

If you have diabetes, high blood pressure and/or anaemia (low blood count), heart, lung or other long-term medical problems, it is important to try and get these as under control as soon as possible before any planned procedure. You may want to discuss your medical condition(s) with your GP to make sure that you are on the right medication. Consider asking your GP or nurse for a review of your medications, especially if you think your health is not as good as it could be.

## Useful numbers and contacts

Team	Ipswich Hospital Contact	Colchester Hospital Contact
Trauma and Orthopaedics	01473 704380	01206 702037
Surgery	01473 702073	01206 742530
Gynaecology	01473 712233 (ask for Finn Clinic)	01206 742530
Community Therapists	0300 1310 111	0300 0032 144
Nutrition advice	Ipswich and East Suffolk Community Dietitians 01473 704000	North Essex Community Dietitians (ACE) 0300 003 2144 (you will need a GP referral for this)

## Stopping smoking

[www.nhs.uk/livewell/smoking/Pages/stopsmokingnewhome.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/smoking/Pages/stopsmokingnewhome.aspx)

## Useful information on preparing for surgery or a procedure

<https://rcoa.ac.uk/patient-information/preparing-surgery-fitter-better-sooner>

**Rethink Mental Illness advice and helpline** 0808 801 0440 – For support with issues related to mental health and wellbeing <https://www.rethink.org/>

**Samaritans** 116 123 – If you want to talk through any concerns, worries and troubles

## General advice

**Citizens Advice** 03444 113 111 – Provides support and assistance on a wide range of issues

**Age UK** 0800 169 65 65 – Provides advice and information for older people

**Silver Line Helpline** 0800 470 80 90 – If you are aged 55 or over, call for a cheerful chat, day or night.