

Department of Physiotherapy Intermittent Claudication Physiotherapy Exercises

You have been given this leaflet because the doctors feel that exercising will help your leg pain.

Regular exercise may help improve your symptoms. Exercising into pain can help build up natural bypasses which will carry more blood to your muscles. Therefore, exercising into the pain in your legs is recommended.

There are different levels of exercise. Please pick the one most suitable for your lifestyle and level of fitness or as advised by your physiotherapist and progress as you are able.

It is important to warm up and cool down prior to completing any exercise. The length of the warmup should reflect the amount of exercise you are doing, the longer you are exercising the longer and more gradual the warmup should be and your physiotherapist/nurse can discuss this with you depending on your current function. The aim is to warm up your muscles which you are going to exercise in addition to preparing your body for activity. Following the exercise/activity it is important to cool down gradually rather than sit down or stop suddenly.

Walking

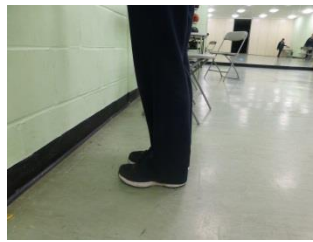
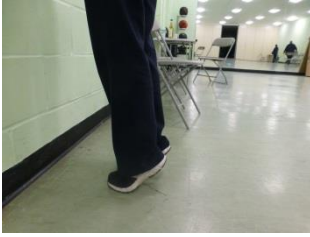
Walking is very beneficial for intermittent claudication. Try and walk daily if you can and increase the distance or pace gradually.

For the following exercises:

- Complete the exercises indoors on a stable surface, ensure you have good fitting footwear on.
- Aim to start 2-3 times per week, gradually increase to 4-5 days per week as you are able and improve.
- Prior to starting the exercises it is helpful to warm up by walking around, after you have finished with the exercises walk around gently before you sit down and rest.
- For each of the exercises aim to complete for 3 minutes, most find it useful to set a timer for the 3 minutes and try to continue as much as you can during the time even if you need to stop and have a rest.
- Your physiotherapist/nurse will highlight which exercises would be good to start with depending on the location of your symptoms.
- Remember to cool down after completing the exercises before sitting down and resting.

Calf raises

In standing, hold on if needed. Lift both heels off the floor and back down again. Continue to repeat. To progress this exercise, you can try standing on one leg.



Wall press

Stand facing the wall. Put your hands on the wall and lean into the wall and then extend your elbows back to the starting position. Move your feet further away from the wall to make it harder. You should feel a stretch in your calf muscles (the back of your leg from the knee to the ankle).



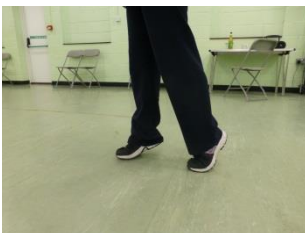
Arm curls

While sitting, bend and straighten your elbows, you can march your feet while you are sitting. Weights can be added if you feel able and increase the weight as you progress. If you don't have weights don't worry, you could use some tinned cans or plastic bottles, you can alter the weight by filling them with more or less water.



Toe walking

Walk around on your toes. You could try completing this in a level hallway or corridor or even up/down a room. If you are unable to complete toe walking for 3 minutes, you can alternate between walking normally and toe walking. Remember to be careful with your balance and you can walk normally to turn around to help your stability and safety.



Squats

Sitting in suitable stable chair, stand up and then sit down again, try not to use your arms. You can make this harder by standing and sitting more slowly. You can also add weights to this exercise. As above you could use tinned cans or plastic bottles.



Step ups

Find a suitable stable step for example a bottom stair and hold the bannister rail. Do NOT use a stool and HOLD ON.

Step up onto the step and back down again, continue to repeat alternating legs. To make this exercise harder you can lift your knees higher as you step up. You can also hold some weights.



Crab walking

Walk sideways across the room and back again, remember if you turn around to return you will only exercise one leg.



Try to complete these exercises regularly through the week or as advised by your physiotherapist or vascular nurse.

For some, they find it useful to record the exercises which they complete daily as this helps see progression. Feel free to use the table overleaf/photocopy this and fill in if you will find this useful. This table is optional and is for your records only.

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For further advice please contact

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