

Pulmonary Rehabilitation Program Activity Guidelines

An important part of the hospital treatment for problems or conditions related to chronic lung disease is rest. Because of the effects of the lung condition, patients may feel very tired and the smallest activity, such as bathing, causes breathlessness and fatigue. Rest is important to help you recover and gradually build up your strength. Long periods of bedrest, however, can also cause problems with your body's ability to function normally. It is important to continue a low level of activity when hospitalized and increase your level of activity as you feel stronger and your tolerance increases.

A **gradual** return to activities helps improve circulation, muscle tone, and heart and lung functions. Doing **self-care activities**, such as bathing, walking to the bathroom, and participating in a **low level exercise program** while you are in the hospital, strengthens your body. These activities prepare you for discharge.

The Pulmonary Rehabilitation Staff will help you learn to pace your activities. You will be given an exercise program to start in the hospital and continue at home. This program will help you safely increase your strength and tolerance to activity. The goal for most people is to resume those activities they did before their hospitalization. The length of time this takes depends on the type of lung problem you have.

More on next page →

Learn more about your health care.

Hospital activities:

Beginning activities during early recovery is important. Activities such as sitting up at the bedside or in a chair and walking short distances near the bed will begin as soon as possible during your hospitalization. The nursing and rehabilitation staff will help you begin and progress your self-care activities. This includes getting out of bed, bathing, dressing and exercise.

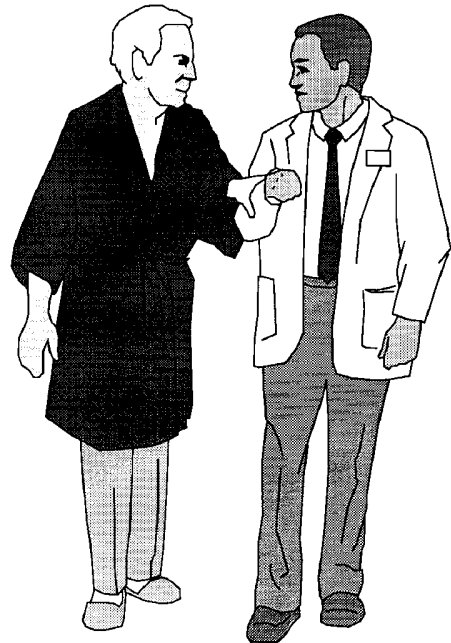
How often activities are done is also important in the recovery process. Once you are able, you will start to walk several times a day. The distance will be increased each day. This will help prevent muscle weakness, infections and other problems that occur when you stay in bed for long periods.

A balance between activity and rest is important to make your recovery smoother. A rest period after any activity is important, at first, to help prevent fatigue, or if you have had lung surgery, unusual soreness. Activities include walking, bathing, eating, visiting, going to a test, and doing breathing, or conditioning exercises. Rest before you get tired and spread these activities out over the entire day.

Use proper technique to get out of bed, a chair or commode, or to reposition yourself in bed. Using good body mechanics prevents unneeded work and strain. The staff will discuss these techniques with you.

If you have had lung surgery:

It will take about 6 to 8 weeks for your sternum (breastbone) to heal, it is important to prevent strain or pressure on this area. Use proper techniques to get out of bed or get up from a chair or commode. Do not do tasks that require you to lift anything heavier than 15 pounds. As you become more active, it is not unusual to feel muscle soreness in your chest. As your sternum and chest muscles heal from surgery, the soreness will go away.



Conditioning exercises:

Symptoms such as weakness and stiff muscles are often the result of not using your muscles for a long time. After only a day or two on bedrest, muscles begin to get weak and stiff. In addition to walking, conditioning exercises stretch and bend your muscles at different angles. This movement helps prevent stiffness and weakness. These exercises should be done at least once a day while you are in the hospital and it is helpful to continue them after you leave the hospital. Conditioning exercises are also useful as **warm-up exercises** before walking or using the stationary bicycle. (Please read the patient education handouts on **Conditioning Exercises**.)

In addition to doing self-care activities, conditioning exercises, and walking in the hall, you may visit the Inpatient Rehabilitation Center to exercise or attend a class. The rehabilitation staff will help you develop an exercise program to start after discharge. They can also provide you with information on a pulmonary rehabilitation program in your local area.

Exercises after you go home:

Regular exercise should be a part of everyone's life. Benefits of exercise include an increased sense of well-being and improved activity tolerance.

The **Home Exercise Program** given to you before discharge is a continuation of exercises done in the hospital. Do these exercises slowly and rhythmically once or twice a day. Use of proper breathing mechanics is very important in improving tolerance to activity.

Effort symptoms:

You will learn when to progress your activity level by knowing how your body tolerates a particular amount of work. Signals that show you are working too hard are called effort symptoms. These include:

- Extreme shortness of breath or difficulty in getting your breath
- Rapid breathing

- Numbness / tingling
- Unusual fatigue
- Dizziness
- Apprehension

If these symptoms occur, stop the exercise and rest. If these symptoms persist, call your doctor.

After having effort symptoms, return to a lower exercise level or shorten the exercise period for a day. Progressing levels too fast will force your body to work too hard before it is ready.

- **Talk to your doctor or others on your health care team if you have questions. You may request more written information from the Library for Health Information at (614) 293-3707 or email: health-info@osu.edu.**