

Staying active in hospital

Inpatient areas

Information for patients and carers

• Home • Community • Hospital

Caring for you

Introduction

Many people experience a loss of strength and confidence during and after a stay in hospital. This is called **deconditioning**.

Deconditioning is when a person loses the ability to do everyday tasks. It happens when you are inactive or spend long periods in bed. It can make everyday tasks harder, such as getting washed or dressed, when you go home from hospital. It can also increase your chances of developing further medical problems.

Staying as active as possible during your hospital stay can help you recover faster and reduce your chances of experiencing deconditioning.

The facts

- Resting in bed for long periods can slow down your recovery.
- Moving regularly can help keep you healthy.
- Even small amounts of activity can make a difference.

Risks of staying in bed

Deconditioning can lead to short and long-term effects, including:

- weak or stiff muscles and joints, making walking harder
- increased confusion or disorientation
- chest infections such as pneumonia
- increased risk of swallowing problems leading to pneumonia
- blood clots in the legs and lungs
- reduced appetite and digestion
- skin damage, including pressure ulcers
- constipation and bladder problems
- increased risk of falls due to weakness

How to stay active in hospital

- **Keep moving** – try to wash, dress and walk to the bathroom to maintain your independence.
- **Wear your own clothes** – ask family or friends to bring in your own clothes and change between day and nightwear.
- **Wear suitable footwear** – choose closed shoes that are flat or slippers with good grip.
- **Tell staff what you can do** – let staff know what you can do yourself. Use your hearing aids, glasses or other communication aids if needed.
- **Sit out of bed** – aim to get out of bed regularly, especially at mealtimes.

- **Walking aids** – make sure you have access to your usual walking aid.
- **Eat and drink** – be as independent as possible at mealtimes and maintain good nutrition.

Things to be aware of:

1. Tell staff if you feel more unwell, are dizzy, in pain or nauseous.
2. Ask to see the physiotherapy or occupational therapy team if you are struggling with walking or personal care.
3. Accept support if staff advise you not to walk alone.
4. Some patients may be asked to stay in bed for a medical reason, your nurse and doctor will advise you if you should not get out of bed.

Remember: staying in bed can put your health and well-being at a much greater risk than moving around.

What next?

If you have any questions or concerns, speak to a member of staff on your ward. This can be a therapist (a physiotherapist or occupational therapist), a nurse, a doctor or any other staff member that is trained to give you advice about staying active in hospital.

There is a lot of information available on the internet about the importance of staying active in everyday life.

- Living Well Warrington – www.livingwellwarrington.org
- Halton Borough Council – www.halton.gov.uk
- The Chartered Society of Physiotherapy – www.csp.org.uk
- British Association of Occupational Therapists – www.rcot.co.uk
- Age UK – www.ageuk.org.uk
- Royal Osteoporosis Society – www.theros.org.uk
- NHS Choices – www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise

Contacts and further information

- North Cheshire and Mersey NHS Foundation Trust – <https://northcheshireandmersey.nhs.uk/>

The trust's website provides information on hospital services and a range of patient guides that may be useful.

Scan QR code or use the link to watch the 'Deconditioning - Our mission to **#ReconditionTheNation**' video, which provides more information about staying active in hospital.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yh6vsylXkyc>

