



ICU: Rehabilitation Programme

While you are on ICU it is important that you maintain your strength and build your stamina. This leaflet was created to provide an exercise routine that will help you to do this. Your physiotherapist will go through this with you. It is expected that you complete these exercises outside of therapy sessions (where possible). Only complete the ‘ticked’ exercises. ☒

If any of these exercises cause you significant pain, stop, move on to the next one and discuss this with a member of staff.

Your name: _____

Benefits of exercise


- To maintain muscle strength.
- To maintain bone density.
- To maintain joint range of movement.
- To maintain and improve exercise tolerance.
- To aid the recovery of the respiratory system.
- To aid return to function and daily life.
- To improve your mood.






Deep breathing exercises





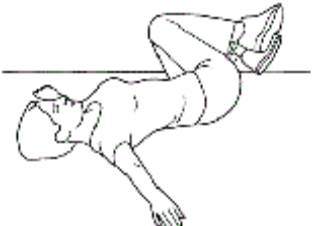

To maintain the health of your lungs and protect them from complications, it is important to take deep breaths while you are in hospital.





Every 30 minutes while you are awake:





- Adopt a position that is comfortable for you.
- Take a deep, slow breath in to fill your lungs.
- Hold for 2-3 seconds then relax and breathe out.
- Repeat this 5 times.

Head and neck exercises		
	<p>Tilt your head to the side, bringing your ear to your shoulder until you feel the stretch.</p> <p>Hold for 20 seconds.</p> <p>Repeat 3 times on each side.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>Look up and tilt your head as far as it is comfortable. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 3 times.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p>Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 3 times each side.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Arm exercises Perform both sides unless advised otherwise.</p>		
	<p>Shrug your shoulders up to your ears. Hold for 2 seconds. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p><u>Lying on your back</u> Bring your arm up and over your head, keeping your arm close to your ear. Hold for 20 seconds. Repeat 5 times.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<p><u>Stand or sit</u> Lift your arm up above your head. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

	<p>Bend and straighten your elbow. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Clench fist / squeeze a soft object. Hold for 3 seconds. Repeat x 10.</p>	<input type="text"/>
<p>Leg exercises while lying down Perform both sides unless advised otherwise.</p>		
	<p>Bend and straighten your knee. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Place a pillow under your knee. Tighten your thigh muscle to straighten the knee (keep it in contact with the pillow). Hold for 5 seconds then relax. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Lying with knees bent towards ceiling. Slowly roll both your legs to the side until a stretch is felt. Hold for 10 seconds. Repeat 5 times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Lying with knees bent towards ceiling. Push through your heels to lift your hips up. Slowly return to start position. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>

	<p>Lying with one leg straight and the other bent. Exercise your straight leg by pulling the toes up and lifting the leg a few centimetres off the bed.</p> <p>Hold for 3 seconds – then slowly relax.</p> <p>Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Bend and straighten your ankles briskly.</p> <p>Repeat 20 times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
Leg exercises while seated		
	<p>Straighten your knee.</p> <p>If this is easy, add an ankle weight.</p> <p>Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Lift your feet to 'march on the spot'</p> <p>March for ____ seconds.</p>	<input type="text"/>

Standing exercises Hold on to something stable if you need to.		
	<p>Push up on to tip toes. Hold for 2 seconds. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Marching on the spot. March for ____ seconds.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Keep leg straight and toes pointing forwards. Lift foot out to the side. Hold for 2 seconds. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>
	<p>Stand up and sit down from the chair/bed. Repeat ____ times.</p>	<input type="text"/>

To find out more about our Trust visit www.royalberkshire.nhs.uk

Please ask if you need this information in another language or format.

L Koslicki, ICU Specialist Physiotherapist / Abbi Tolputt, RACI physiotherapist

Reviewed: September 2025

Next review due: September 2027