

EXERCISES AFTER STROKE

A Guide for Patients and Families



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ACTIVITIES AND EXERCISE AT HOME

Once you return home, regular movement and daily exercise are important for your recovery.

- ✓ Wear loose, comfortable clothing and avoid wearing shoes while exercising.
- ✓ **Plan before you move.** Thinking about the activity before doing it helps make the movement smoother and easier.
- ✓ **Practice the movement.**
 - Start by performing the movement with your stronger side to understand how it feels.
 - Then try it with your weaker side, watch that side as you move to improve control.
 - A family member or caregiver may assist or guide your movement if needed.

Be mindful not to overwork weak muscles, they can tire easily. Begin with just a few minutes at a time and gradually increase as your strength improves.

- ✓ Some muscles, especially in the arm and hand, can become tight. Gentle daily stretching helps prevent stiffness.
- ✓ Visualize both sides of your body moving together, this

If you experience any difficulty or uncertainty about the exercises in this guide, contact your physiotherapist for advice and support.

POSITIONING: HOW TO GIVE SUPPORT TO YOUR WEAK SIDE



SITTING

- ✔ Back supported
- ✔ Weak arm supported
- ✔ Feet flat on floor



LYING IN BED

- ✔ Arm supported



LYING ON YOUR STRONG SIDE

- ✔ Shoulder and hip forward



LYING ON YOUR WEAK SIDE

- ✔ Arm resting on the bed palm up

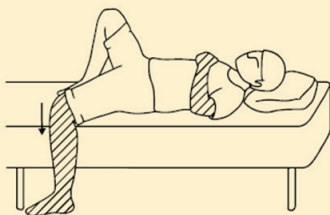
LENGTHENING YOUR ELBOW AND HAND MUSCLES

- ✓ Stand next to a table
- ✓ Place your weak hand flat on the table with your elbow straight
- ✓ If necessary hold your elbow to help straighten your arm
- ✓ Gently put weight through your straight arm

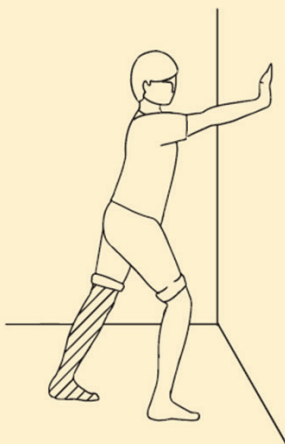


LENGTHENING YOUR LEG MUSCLES

- ✓ Stretching your thigh muscles



- ✓ Stretching your calf muscles
- ✓ Keep your heel on the floor

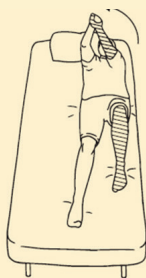


ROLLING ONTO YOUR SIDE IN BED

LIE ON YOUR BACK

To roll onto your strong side

- 1 Turn your head towards your strong side
- 2 Clasp both hands in front of you or bring your weak arm across your body-do not lift your arm up above 90 degrees (shoulder level)
- 3 Bend your weak leg so that your foot is flat on bed or bend both legs up
- 4 Push down through your weak foot
- 5 Roll over



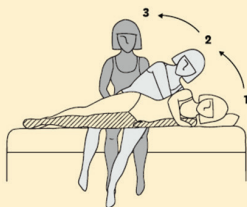
YOUR HELPER CAN

- ✓ Clasp your hands and move your arms across your body
- ✓ Lift your weak leg up and hold your foot flat on the bed
- ✓ Instruct you to reach forward towards me and roll over



MOVING FROM LYING TO SITTING ON THE SIDE OF THE BED

- 1 Roll on your weak side. Keep your weak arm and leg well forward
- 2 Carefully swing both legs over the side of the bed
- 3 Push up with your strong arm
- 4 If you can help with your weak arm do so
- 5 Your strong leg can help your weak leg if needed, by lifting it from the ankle



YOUR HELPER STANDS FACING YOU AND CAN

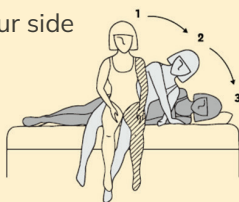
- ✓ Help to move your legs over the edge of the bed

MOVING FROM SITTING ON THE SIDE OF THE BED TO LYING DOWN

- 1 Lean toward your weak side
- 2 Lower yourself down slowly on your weak arm
- 3 Swing your feet up onto the bed so that you are now lying on your side

YOUR HELPER CAN

- ✓ Lift your feet up onto the bed



LYING DOWN WITH HELP

YOUR HELPER

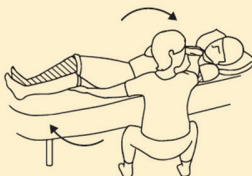
- ✓ Stands side on to the bed with their outside leg forward
- ✓ Places their arm across your chest to hold onto your far shoulder

YOU

- ✓ Hold onto the helpers arm with two hands if possible or just use your strong hand

YOUR HELPER THEN

- ✓ Tips you slowly sideways towards the head of the bed and this will help your legs to start moving upwards
- ✓ Helps you swing your legs up onto the bed by using the back of their arm



HOW TO BALANCE WHILE SITTING

SIT ON THE SIDE OF THE BED WITH YOUR FEET ON THE FLOOR OR SUPPORTED

- ✓ Find the mid-line, sit as straight as possible
- ✓ Move from one side of your bottom to the other so that you are slightly off centre



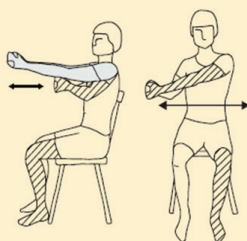
LEAN FORWARD AND BACK



EXERCISES WHILE SITTING

CLASP YOUR HANDS TOGETHER AND MOVE YOUR BODY AND ARMS TO

- ✓ Reach forward and back
- ✓ Reach to the left and then to the right



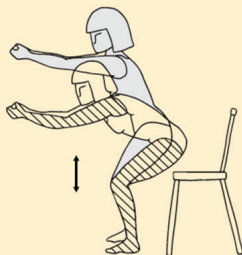
- ✓ Reach towards the floor (to the middle, to the left, to the right)
- ✓ Reach around and up



HOW TO STAND UP FROM A BED OR CHAIR

WITHOUT HELP

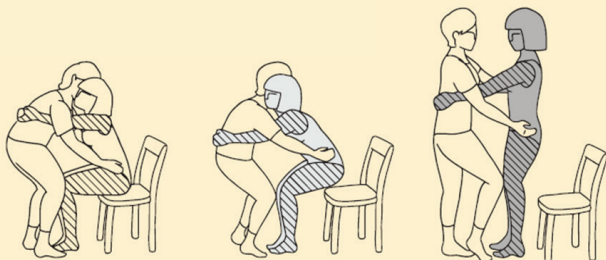
- 1 Move forward to the front half of the bed (or chair) by shuffling forward
- 2 Link your hands together or use your strong arm to push up
- 3 Have your feet shoulder width apart, well back and flat on the floor
- 4 Bend forward at the hips (bring your nose over your toes)
- 5 Reach forward
- 6 Push through your legs to stand up (equal weight on both feet)



You may feel safer practising sitting to standing with a table in front of you

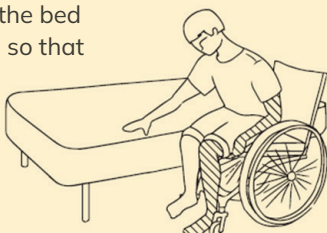
YOUR HELPER CAN

- 1 Help you to move forward in the chair
- 2 Put your arms around their waist
- 3 Steady your shoulders to help you stand up
- 4 Block your knees in front or stand in a lunge position - one foot in front of the other and shift their weight back as they help you stand up



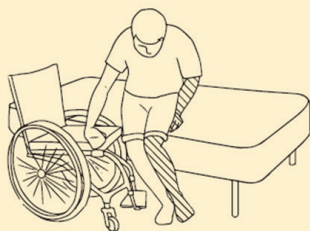
TRANSFERRING INTO BED FROM A WHEELCHAIR

- 1 Have the chair as close to the bed as possible and positioned so that your strong side is next to the bed
- 2 Come forward in the chair
- 3 Put your hand on the bed
- 4 As you start to stand up, turn and step with your strong leg
- 5 Sit down



TRANSFERRING OUT OF BED INTO A WHEELCHAIR

- 1 The position of the chair is changed so that your strong leg always leads



TRANSFERRING IN AND OUT OF A CAR

- ✓ Have the wheelchair alongside the car
- ✓ Have the car seat back as far as possible
- ✓ Have the car window wound down so that if necessary you can hold onto the window frame
- ✓ Stand up from the wheelchair
- ✓ Step around and sit on the seat sideways
- ✓ Lift your legs into the car

GETTING UP FROM A FALL

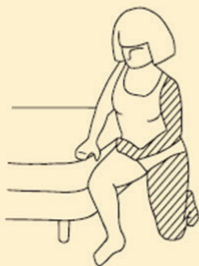
- ✓ Sit with your strong side next to a bed/chair



- ✓ Place your strong arm on the seat of the bed/chair
- ✓ Get into a kneeling position



- ✓ Bring your strong leg up



- ✓ Push on your strong arm and leg to sit on the seat of the bed/chair

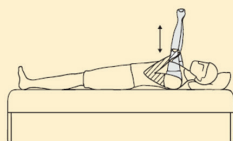


EXERCISES TO HELP THE RETURN OF MOVEMENT IN YOUR ARM AND HAND

- ✓ Developing the full use of your arm and hand after a stroke is very challenging.
- ✓ In the early days it is easier to move your arm with help, either by holding it with your strong arm or having your helper assist.
- ✓ Working on your shoulder control is very important. It gives stability to your whole arm.
- ✓ When exercising it may be easier to start by lying on your strong side (weak side uppermost) or back.
- ✓ Think about using your arm and attempt to use it. Once you are getting movement back in your arm, try to use both arms in daily life (washing, dressing, and household tasks).
- ✓ To use your hand there should be a balance between opening and closing. It is important to concentrate on opening the hand because the grasping muscles tend to become short and tight.
- ✓ Be aware of the tension that might come into your arm when you attempt tasks that may be too hard. If your arm gets tighter, stop and stretch your muscles before you begin again.

LYING ON YOUR BACK

- 1 With hands clasped, reach towards the ceiling; do not go past 90 degrees if you have any shoulder pain



- 2 With arms bent, push both elbows away from your body. Helper resists on the strong side to encourage the weak side to move

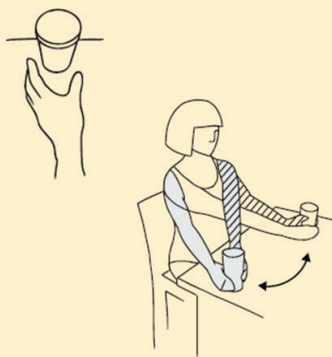


- 3 Shoulder shrugging - lift both shoulders up towards your ears. You can also do this while sitting

SEATED WITH BOTH ARMS ON A TABLE

- 1 Try reaching towards an object with your weak arm

- 2 With your weak hand flat on a cloth and your strong hand on top, move your arms around the table. Guide your weak arm with your strong one



- 3 Slide a glass over the surface of the table using weak hand and keeping your shoulder forward. Your helper may hold your hand on the glass (your helper should not try to guide the movement)

STANDING

- 1 Place both your hands flat on a table
- 2 Lean onto your weak arm and hand with the elbow straight. Keeping your hand flat on a table, move your weight forward. Keep your thumb and fingers apart

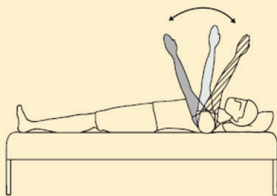


This is a good exercise to prevent your hand becoming tight. You or your helper may need to support your weak arm

ADVANCED EXERCISES

LYING ON YOUR BACK

- 1 Reach towards the ceiling with your weak arm. When your arm is straight, move it a small distance in different directions e.g. up, down, out to the side



Make sure you have enough control to do the movement without your arm falling down, otherwise you will need help

- 2 Bend your elbow to touch your head with your hand. Straighten your arm and hold it straight

- 3 Move your hand onto the opposite shoulder. Straighten your arm

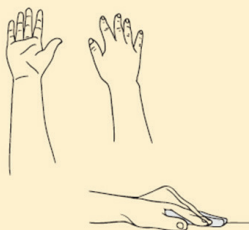


YOUR HELPER CAN

- ✓ Take your hand towards your face
- ✓ Steady your upper arm while you straighten your elbow

SEATED AT A TABLE WITH YOUR WEAK ARM SUPPORTED

- 1 Bend and straighten the elbow of your weak arm
- 2 With your elbow bent, turn your palm up and down
- 3 With your forearm supported, keeping your fingers straight, try and make an arch with your hand



DAILY ACTIVITIES TO PRACTICE FOR STRENGTHENING YOUR ARM AND HAND

- ✓ Bend and straighten your wrist joint
- ✓ Lift your hand while holding a light cup
- ✓ Place your hand around a cup. Do not lift it but hold it for 20 seconds.
- ✓ Relax (let go) and open your hand
- ✓ Progress to picking up the cup and putting it down
- ✓ This can also be practiced with a variety of objects (e.g. blocks)
- ✓ Use both hands together to pick up a ball, a large cup, a small box
- ✓ Do activities with a towel(folding, rolling, drying)
- ✓ Use play dough... poke it, put it in the palm of your hand and move it round with your fingers. Use both hands to move it
- ✓ Do finger exercises; tapping, touch each finger with the thumb of your weak hand, bend and straighten your fingers

FUNCTIONAL HAND AND FINGER ACTIVITIES

- ✓ Pouring water from a jug into a large bowl
- ✓ Writing, drawing - start with a fat pen/marker or a grip on pen
- ✓ Rolling a ball on the table
- ✓ Scrunching up paper
- ✓ Holding and turning over cards
- ✓ Picking up small objects like buttons and coins
- ✓ Using pegs - open, close and peg onto cloth/paper with weak hand
- ✓ Use both hands to do the task
- ✓ Cutting - knife, scissors
- ✓ Picking up sticks/straws
- ✓ Use iPads, computers, and phones

BASIC EXERCISES

EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR BACK AND STOMACH MUSCLES

LYING ON YOUR BACK, WITH YOUR KNEES BENT, FEET FLAT

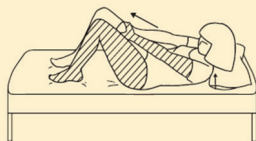
- 1 With both knees bent up, and feet on bed, draw your tummy in and flatten your back into the bed. Hold on the count of five, then relax. Repeat.



- 2 From the middle take both knees to one side, and return. Repeat to the other side



- 3 Clasp your hands together in front of you, reach forward and raise your chin towards your chest. Try to hold to the count of five

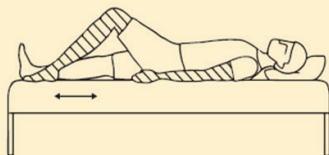


- 4 Repeat the above exercise moving your arms and head to your weak side. Try to hold to the count of five
- 5 With your arms by your side, pull your shoulder blades together

EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR HIP

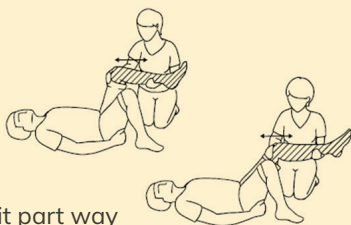
LYING ON YOUR BACK, WITH YOUR KNEES BENT, FEET FLAT

- 1 Slowly bend and straighten your weak leg, keeping your foot on the bed

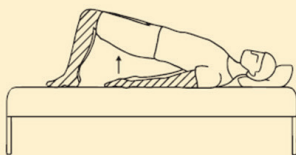


YOUR HELPER CAN

- ✓ Support your leg while you lift it up toward your chest
- ✓ Help you to slowly move it part way down
- ✓ Help you to bend it up again
- ✓ Try to control the movement so it becomes easier and smoother



- 2 Lift both hips (bridge) hold them up for 10 seconds then relax. Start by lifting up only 3-2 cm off the bed. Progress to keeping your hips level



YOUR HELPER CAN

- ✓ Keep your leg in the mid-line
 - ✓ Support your leg as you move and stop it falling out
- 3 Lift your knee and foot forward your chest. Keep it steady, do not let it fall out

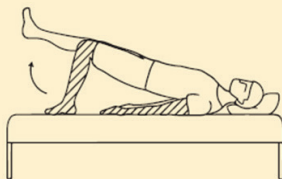
ADVANCED EXERCISES

LYING ON YOUR BACK

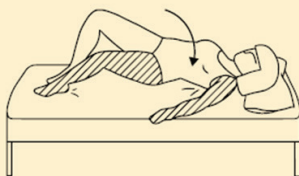
- ✓ Bridge to move over on the bed
- ✓ Make sure you put weight through your weak side



- ✓ Bridge with your strong leg straight



- ✓ Bridge and rotate/twist

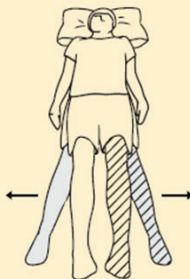


LYING ON YOUR BACK WITH YOUR LEGS STRAIGHT

- 1 Push your feet apart keeping your heels on the bed, knees straight

YOUR HELPER CAN

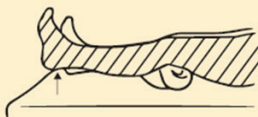
- ✓ Resist on the strong side. This uses your strong side to strengthen the weaker side
- ✓ Show you how to push your heels into the bed with feet apart and knees straight
- 2 Turn your knees and feet in toward one another and then out



EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR KNEE

LYING ON YOUR BACK

- 1 Put a rolled towel under your weak knee. Lift your foot up and hold your knee straight. Slowly lower it.



SITTING ON THE SIDE OF THE BED

- 1 Put a rolled towel under your thigh so that foot is off the floor. Straighten your knee and then slowly allow it to bend. As you straighten your knee, pull up your foot.
- 2 For advanced exercises add resistance to the above movements (up/down) with your strong foot.



- 3 Place a hand towel, (rolled and taped), under your feet. Roll it forward and back on floor. Then try to do it only with your weak foot.



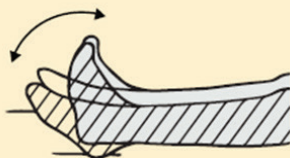
STAND STRAIGHT

- 1 Bend your weak knee and lift your feet behind you
- 2 Practice stepping backwards

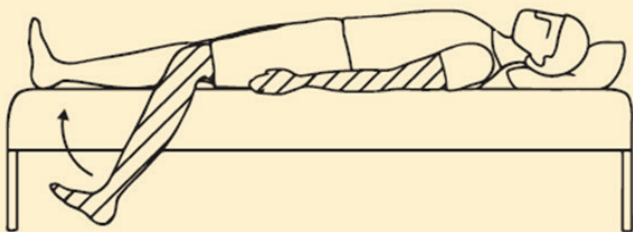
EXERCISES TO STRENGTHEN YOUR ANKLE

LYING ON YOUR BACK

- 1 Start with your toes pointing down, try to pull them up. This will be easier with your knee slightly bent.



- 2 Place your weak leg bent over the side of the bed. Lift your hip and knee and pull up your foot.



YOUR HELPER CAN

Help you lift your weak leg up

- 3 Sitting with your feet flat on the floor
- 4 Pull all your toes up
- 5 Try to keep your foot in the midline
- 6 Progress to moving only your weak foot

STANDING

- ✓ If you have very weak, or no foot movement, some form of foot splint -ankle foot orthosis (AFO) or support bandage may be necessary – see your therapist.
- ✓ If your leg is very weak you may need a gaiter or brace for your knee.
- ✓ If you have an arm that has very little recovery and is dropping down you may need some shoulder support/ arm sling because a shoulder can become painful if not supported.

STANDING

The goal is to move more weight onto your weak leg so that it becomes stronger.

- 1 Stand with your feet shoulder width apart and your strong hand holding onto a table. Keep your head up and your back straight.
- 2 Place your hand flat on the table. Move your weight from your strong to your weak leg and back again.



If this is difficult, face the table and use your strong arm for stability.

EXERCISE FOR A VERY WEAK LEG (WEARING BRACE OR GAITER)

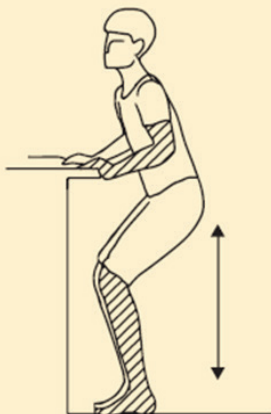
Place your feet shoulder width apart

- ✓ Shift a small amount of weight from one leg to the other.
- ✓ Stand on your weak leg, while holding onto a table. Try to lift your strong leg up (this should only be a small distance off the floor to start with).
- ✓ Avoid leaning on the table.
- ✓ Avoid collapsing at the hip when standing on your weak leg. Tighten hip muscles.

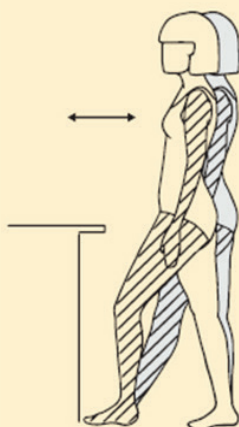


AS YOUR LEG STRENGTHENS DO THESE EXERCISES WITHOUT A KNEE SUPPORT

- ✓ Bend both knees together, as if to sit down, and then straighten them. Do not let your weak knee snap back.



- ✓ With one foot in front of the other, move your weight forwards and backwards. Keep your body straight. Repeat with the other leg in front.
- ✓ Hold the table, stand up on your toes.
- ✓ Hold the table, rock back on your heels.



WALKING

It is important when walking to:

- ✓ Remember to straighten up before starting to walk
- ✓ As you step forward with your weak leg move your pelvis forward on that side
- ✓ Try not to let your weak knee snap back
- ✓ Make sure you are taking as much weight as possible through your weak side
- ✓ You may need support through your strong side (walking stick or helper). If using a stick, hold it in your strong hand. Move the stick, step with your weak leg and then with your strong leg. Try to make your steps the same length
- ✓ Walking an increasing distance is important to improve endurance and lessen fatigue

FURTHER EXERCISES

- 01 ✓ Stand on your weak leg and do small stepping movements
 - ✓ Out to the side and back
 - ✓ Forward and back. As you practice stepping, think of lifting your foot up and placing your heel on the floor

- 02 Stand on your strong leg and repeat
- 03 Facing the table, step sideways to the left and then to the right
- 04 Standing sideways to the table, hold on and walk around it

STAIRS

First practice stepping onto a low step (8cm/3" step) – helper close by:

- ✓ Stand on your weak leg and put your strong leg up onto the step
- ✓ Keep your weak hip straight
- ✓ Put your foot down again
- ✓ Put your weak foot up onto the step
- ✓ Put your foot down again
- ✓ Advance to stepping up

GOING UPSTAIRS

Put your strong leg on the step first

COMING DOWNSTAIRS

Put your weak leg down first

NOTE: IN CASE OF EMERGENCY

If you or someone around you suddenly develops weakness, trouble speaking, loss of balance, severe headache, or any other warning signs of a stroke, call 998 right away for ambulance support.

فقيه.

مستشفى فقيه الجامعي

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