



Royal Free London
NHS Foundation Trust

Improving your fitness before a liver transplantation

Information for patients

You may need to wait several months to a year for your liver transplant. During this time many patients find that their physical fitness declines, but you can improve this by being physically active. There is evidence that fitter patients cope better with complications after surgery and experience a better recovery. You should continue to maintain an active lifestyle after your transplant, as this can help you to avoid long term complications and keep you healthy for years to come.

Daily activities

You can improve your fitness by making simple changes like walking instead of using a bus or car, or taking the stairs instead of a lift. Continue with your normal daily activities and minimise the time that you are inactive.

Moderate exercise

- We recommend you to do **two walks of at least 15 minutes each day**. Walk at a moderate pace that causes you to feel warmer and breathe harder. You should be able to carry on a conversation while you walk.
- If you prefer a different form of activity such as cycling, you can do this instead. Again, do two sessions of at least 15 minutes each day and use a moderate pace that causes you to breathe harder, but allows you to carry on a conversation.
- Always consider safety when choosing what type of exercise to do. If you have trouble with your balance, it may be safer to use a stationary bicycle. If you have pain in your knees or hips, you may find it better to carry out a low impact form of exercise such as swimming or cycling.
- Each week, gradually increase the time you spend exercising. Even exercising just a few minutes more each

week will help over time. Increase the pace you walk, swim or cycle as you feel able.

- If you are already active, you might prefer to start with three sessions of 25 minutes per week of vigorous exercise. Vigorous exercise causes you to feel warmer and breathe much harder, making it difficult to carry on a conversation. This includes running or singles tennis. Again, gradually increase the amount of vigorous exercise you do each week.

Strengthening exercises

- You will be provided with a list of strengthening exercises that are appropriate for your fitness level.
- **Do your strengthening exercises two to three times per week**, with at least two days between sessions. During each session, work through all of the exercises twice. The exercises should feel difficult, but not impossible for you to complete.
- If you feel that you are recovering well from the exercises, you can work through them three times each session.

Healthy eating

- Eating a balanced meal is advisable to all patients. You should follow the guidance given to you by your dietitian.
- Virtually no food actually damages the liver or is prohibited for patients with chronic liver disease. Alcohol must be avoided.
- In most patients with chronic liver disease, eating an adequate amount of calories and protein is much more important than avoiding specific types of food, so it is important that you have a good, varied diet that you enjoy.

- It can be helpful to split your food intake into three main meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner) and three snacks (mid-morning, mid-afternoon, late evening). The late-evening snack is the most important, as it covers the long interval between dinner and breakfast.
- Reducing the salt in your diet can help to decrease the ascites and swelling. It may take some time to adjust, but it usually gets easier with time. However, if you keep feeling that this makes your food unpleasant to eat, and that it makes you eat less, please speak to your hospital doctor, GP or dietitian.
- Some patients with liver disease have other diseases such as diabetes, or are overweight or obese, which requires dietary adjustments. Please remember to tell your doctor about all your illnesses and about any dietary advice you have already received from other doctors, nurses or dietitians.

For more information about liver services at the Royal Free London visit our website:

www.royalfree.nhs.uk/services/services-a-z/liver-services/

If you have any feedback on this leaflet or for a full list of references for it, please email: rf.communications@nhs.net

This leaflet is also available in large print. If you need this leaflet in another format – for example Braille, a language other than English or audio – please ask a member of staff.

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