

Reference sources

- **Children's Cancer and Leukaemia Group**
www.cclg.org.uk
- **Information on Childhood Cancers**
The Royal Marsden Hospital
www.royalmarsden.nhs.uk

Contact details

We hope this information has been helpful to you. If you require further information, please call:

Physiotherapy Department: 01483 464153

Hascombe Ward: 01483 464071

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm
Monday to Friday

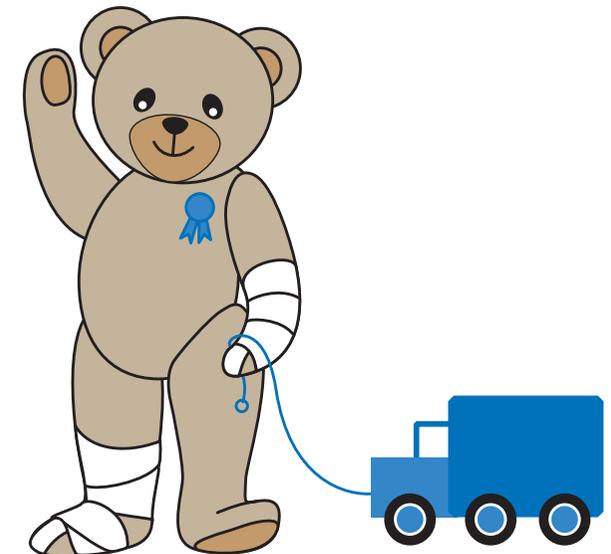
If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

Past review date: September 2017
Future review date: September 2020
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PIN170816-1291



Physiotherapy for children with cancer

Physiotherapy Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet contains physiotherapy advice for children diagnosed with a cancer, including leukaemia.

Why might your child need physiotherapy?

Being treated for cancer can be a long process. Some children become less mobile than they used to be and are unable to take part in their usual activities. Some of the chemotherapy drugs can cause aches and pains in the legs, and weaken the muscles in hands and feet. Children are still growing, and the combination of this with reduced activity and muscle strength can cause muscle tightness, cramps, tip toe walking or a flat footed walking pattern.

Your child may find it difficult to clear secretions from their chest if they become unwell. Respiratory physiotherapy can help whilst in hospital, and this may be something that can be continued independently at home.

What will physiotherapy entail?

The physiotherapist will assess current mobility levels. They can help your child get back on their feet if they've been unwell and provide walking aids if needed. They will assess any weakness or tightness in the leg muscles and advise on suitable activities and footwear. They may teach stretches and strengthening exercises which should be carried out regularly. Should temporary use of a wheelchair be required, a referral to wheelchair services can be made.

Who can refer to physiotherapy?

Any of the doctors or nurses on Hascombe ward or from the specialist cancer centre can refer a child to physiotherapy. If you have any concerns please discuss it with them. Once a physiotherapy assessment has been performed, any follow up can usually happen as and when the child is an inpatient on Hascombe. Some benefit from outpatient follow up in the physiotherapy department. It may be more appropriate for very young children to be seen by a community physiotherapist at home.

What can I do to help?

Encourage your child to be as independent as they can be. It is natural to want to help as much as possible when such a diagnosis is made, but try to encourage them to remain active when they are feeling well. This keeps muscles strong and loose, and builds reserves for if they are not so well. Even if they are in hospital, encourage walking to the toilet, assisting you with washing and dressing and sitting out of bed if possible. Try not to carry younger children all the time if they are able to crawl or walk, even if they tire quickly. Push along or ride on toys can be useful if they are reluctant.

If cramps are a problem a gentle walk, heat pack or massage can be helpful. Good supportive shoes or over ankle boots can give extra support and discourage tip toe walking. Heel walking with toes off the floor and a straight back is a useful strengthening exercise in mobile children. Stretching the calf by allowing heels to drop off the bottom step whilst holding

the banister is simple yet effective (figure 1). If they are too young for this you can stretch the calf by cupping your hand round the heel and pushing the foot up (figure 2, toes to nose). Good sitting posture will help minimise back and hip pain and stretch the hamstrings (figure 3).

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3

