

# Physical activity after TIA (Transient Ischemic Attack) and Stroke

Neurological Physiotherapy Department



Patient information leaflet

**This leaflet should inform you what physical activity is and why it is important following TIA and Stroke. It should inform you what the safe levels of exercise are and also when it is not recommended.**

## **What is physical activity?**

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Any activity that moves your body and uses more energy than when you are resting. Examples include walking, cycling and recreational activities such as gardening.

Exercise is a type of physical activity that is planned and structured e.g. an exercise class or swimming.

## **What do the terms TIA and Stroke mean?**

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Transient ischemic attack (TIA) is when blood flow to a part of the brain stops temporarily. Symptoms begin suddenly, last less than 24 hours and go away completely. Symptoms may include Facial weakness, Arm weakness or Speech disturbance. They are a warning sign that you may have a Stroke someday. In a Stroke, blood flow to part of the brain is damaged and the resulting symptoms last more than 24 hours.

## **Modifiable risk factors of TIA and Stroke**

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- High blood pressure
- Atrial Fibrillation (AF)
- Smoking
- Diabetes
- Sedentary lifestyle
- Obesity
- Abnormal blood fats

## **What are the benefits of physical activity?**

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- Reduces your risk factors and halves the risk of Stroke!
- Reduces blood pressure and cholesterol
- Improves heart and lung function

- Improves blood sugar regulation
- Promotes loss of body weight and fat stores
- Improves muscle strength
- Improves body's ability to handle insulin

## **What physical activity is recommended for me?**

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One hundred and fifty minutes (two and a half hours) each week of moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity. Adults (19-64 years old) should aim to do some physical activity every day.

Moderate intensity activity will make you feel warm and slightly breathless but able to hold a conversation. Do a little bit each day and build up the intensity gradually. Try and include a warm up and cool down, including some stretches.

Muscle strengthening activity should also be included twice a week. This could include carrying groceries, a formal exercise program or dancing.

Only exercise when feeling well.

Wear appropriate clothing and shoes.

Drink plenty of fluids, preferably water.

Make exercise fun! Encourage your partner, family and friends to join you!

## **When is exercise not recommended?**

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If you have unstable heart disease or cardiovascular disease.

You should stop exercising if you have discomfort in your upper body; you become faint or short of breath. If your symptoms continue then please contact your general practitioner.

Do not exercise vigorously for 2 hours after eating.

If unsure check with your doctor before starting any new exercise programmes.

Or contact your physiotherapist:

## Contact details

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### Physiotherapy Department

Royal Surrey County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust  
Guildford

**Telephone: 01483 464153**

#### References

- Department of Health, UK Physical Activity Guidelines, July 2011
- The Stroke Association, [www.stroke.org.uk](http://www.stroke.org.uk), 0845 30 33 100
- Stroke: The diagnosis and acute management of Stroke and Transient Ischemic Attacks, NICE Clinical Guidelines, July 2008

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### PALS and Advocacy contact details

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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](mailto: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.

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Author: Erica Morrison

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