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Canolfan Llosgiadau a Llawfeddygaeth Blastig Cymru
Welsh Centre for Burns and Plastic Surgery



Exercise after Sustaining a burn to your leg or foot

Physiotherapy Department

You may like to watch the short film to accompany this leaflet on the ABMU Health Board TV Youtube Channel:

‘Exercise after sustaining a burn to your leg or foot’

Or type this link into your internet window / browser:

<http://bit.ly/2rWZupo>

Also found here via QR code:



Following a burn to your leg or foot you may experience pain and swelling. This may cause problems with walking around and other daily activities.

This leaflet has been designed to inform you about your injury and show you how to do appropriate exercises.

Treatment of your burn:

- You may have bulky dressings/bandages at first. These will be changed to less bulky ones as the burn heals.
- White **flamazine** cream may be applied to your burn to treat and prevent infections.
- You may require regular dressing changes until the burn has healed.
- You may require a Darco Boot (footwear) to prevent your dressings becoming wet/dirty. This will be provided by nursing staff.
- You will see a Physiotherapist for appropriate exercises to maintain your movement and mobility.

Pain management

You may have been prescribed pain killers by the doctor. Ensure that you take these regularly. If you were not prescribed any pain killers, then take your normal pain killers regularly. Your exercises may increase your pain as you are stretching the burnt area, which is why it is important to manage this.

Exercise

As a burn heals the skin becomes tight and can restrict your movement unless it is maintained in a good position and exercised regularly whilst it is healing.

Physiotherapy exercises will be provided to prevent tightening and restriction and encourage normal activity and function.

Positioning

Your most comfortable position will be where your wound/skin is not being stretched, however this will lead to longer term problems with restricted movement and loss of function.

Whilst your burn is healing, elevate your leg on a stool when sitting and walk around regularly to prevent swelling.

If required you may see an occupational therapist for splinting to maintain adequate joint position.

Physiotherapy exercises

Repeat each exercise 10 times every hour during the day.

Before getting out of bed in the morning, remember to loosen your legs/feet to minimise discomfort by:

- 1) Paddling your ankles up and down
- 2) Bending and straightening your knees

The first few exercises will be painful. This is normal and will not cause you any harm. Keep going with the exercises as they will get easier.



Exercise 1 - Calf Raises

Whilst sitting on the edge of the bed or in the chair, raise your heels off the floor alternately.



Exercise 2 - Toe Raises

Tap your toes off the floor alternately.



Exercise 3 - Knee Extensions

Straighten your leg in front of you. Hold for 3 seconds. Return your foot to the floor. Repeat with the other leg.



Exercise 4 - Marching

From a standing position, march on the spot until your pain/discomfort settles.

Exercise 5 - Walking

Walking around normally is very important for healing and independence.

Aim to get up and walk around hourly.

Exercise 6 - Calf Stretch

Stand facing a wall with your hands to support you. Step one leg behind you.



Lean forward, keeping your back leg straight and heel on the floor.

Hold for 20 seconds and repeat on the other leg.

Surgery

You may require surgery if your burn is not healing of its own accord. This may involve a skin graft which means taking skin from another area of your body and covering the burnt area to allow it to heal. If you do require surgery you will need to stop your exercises until your graft is checked by your surgeon around 5-7 days after your surgery. Your physiotherapist will then recommence your exercise programme and provide any further exercises required.

Further information

Your Physiotherapist may provide you with further stretches if indicated.

If you have any other problems or burns involving other joints, then your Physiotherapist may also provide you with further exercises targeting those specific areas.

When you have completed your exercises you will feel your legs are much looser. It is important to keep moving normally throughout the day as your legs/feet may stiffen up very quickly between each session.

It is vital to do your exercises first thing in the morning as you will find this is the worst time of day for joint stiffness.

You can stop doing your exercises when:

- Exercising is very easy.
- You are walking around and using your legs normally throughout the day.

As your burn heals your dressings will be reduced in size or frequency. The healed area will need an amount of regular creaming with a non perfumed cream for example, double base, E45 or Nivea.

If you have any problems with these exercises, increasing swelling or pain, then do not hesitate to contact us or your doctor via burns dressing room telephone: 01792 703984 or 703821.

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