

Early Mobility in the Medical / Surgical Intensive Care Unit

**For patients of the Medical/Surgical Intensive Care Unit
(MSICU) at Toronto General Hospital, and their caregivers**

This pamphlet will give you information about:

- Why helping to move, stretch and exercise as early as possible in the MSICU is important
- How caregivers can help with exercises
- Different exercises for patients



A physiotherapist will help to assess and treat you while you are in the MSICU. This treatment may include activities such as:

1. Chest techniques (to decrease secretions and improve breathing)
2. Active and passive general exercises
3. General movement, such as getting into a chair or walking

What can I do to help with early mobility exercises?

Active and Passive Range of Motion (ROM) exercises

ROM exercises help to stretch and move your joints and muscles to help with your blood flow and flexibility.

Active ROM exercises are exercises that you can do by yourself.

- They help contract the muscles to maintain or improve strength.
- You may still need help and encouragement during Active ROM exercises.
- If you cannot do Active ROM exercises, Passive ROM exercises can be done instead.

Passive ROM exercises are exercises that you cannot do by yourself.

Another person needs to move your joints for you.

- The person helping should make sure to support your limbs, above and below the joint, and move slowly and gently.
- Some patients may begin with Passive ROM exercises, and then start Active ROM exercises when they are able to do so.

What should I know before helping with ROM exercises?

Check with the nurse before starting any exercises to make sure that it is the right exercise for you and that it is safe to begin.

- Do one exercise at a time.
- Stop the ROM exercises if you feel pain. These exercises should not cause pain.
- Be aware of your breathing tube or oxygen and medical lines. Do not move, pull, block off or pinch any lines or tubes. Ask the nurse for help if you are not sure what to do.
- It's important that you breathe normally and do not hold your breath while doing these exercises.
- If you are doing Passive ROM exercises, do not go beyond the normal movement of the joint. Do not force or overstretch the muscle or joint.
- If you are helping the patient with these exercises, make sure you are safe. Do not strain or hurt yourself.
- If you or the person helping you get tired during the exercises, take a break before continuing.

What else can I do as a caregiver to help with early mobility in the MSICU?

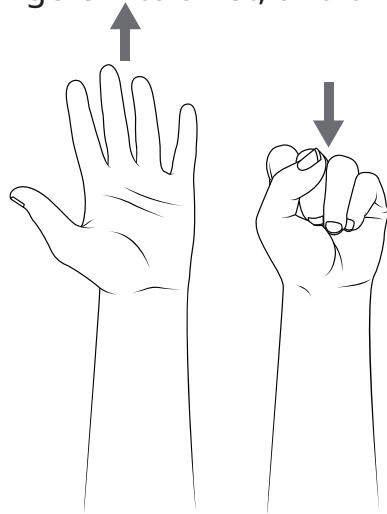
- Encourage the patient to take part in self-care activities with the nurse.
- Encourage the patient to try to do as much as possible for themselves safely.
- Encourage the patient to take part in their exercise plan and work with their physiotherapist.

Passive and Active ROM Exercises

- These exercises may be done while you are lying on your back or sitting on a chair. Repeat on both sides.
- Do 10 repetitions of each exercise, 2 to 3 times every day.

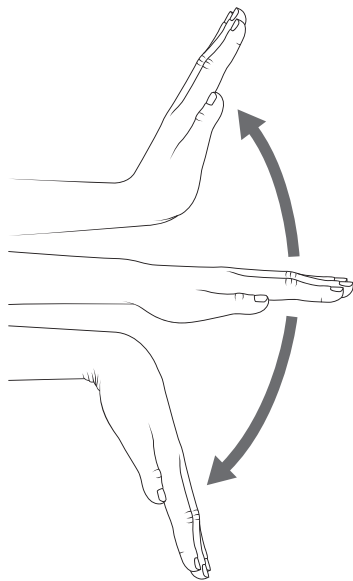
Gripping

Bend your fingers into a fist, and then straighten your fingers.



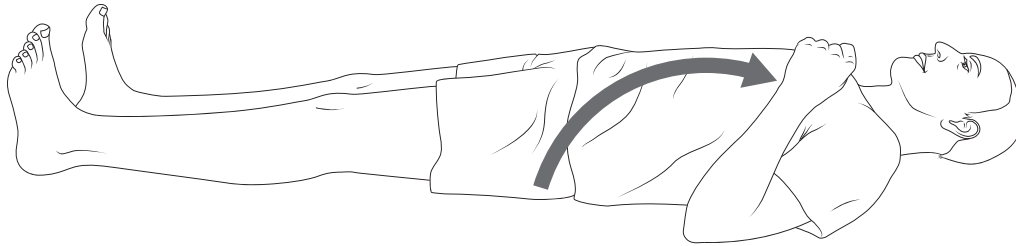
Wrist flexion and extension

Bend and straighten your wrist back and forth. Keep your fingers straight.



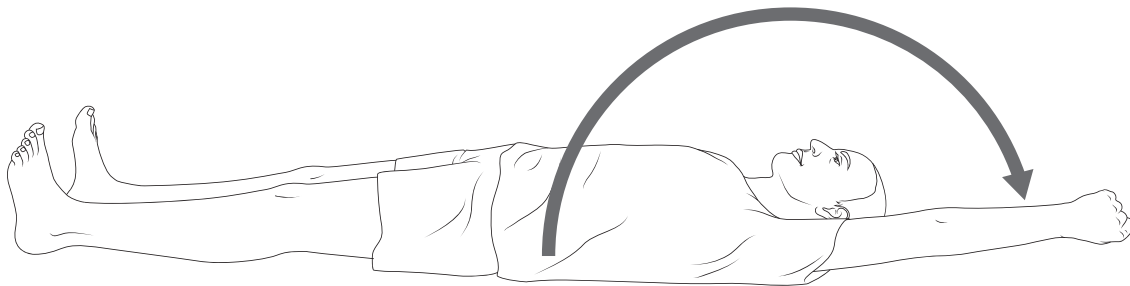
Elbow flexion

With your arm straight at your side, bend your elbow towards the shoulder and then, back down to the starting position.



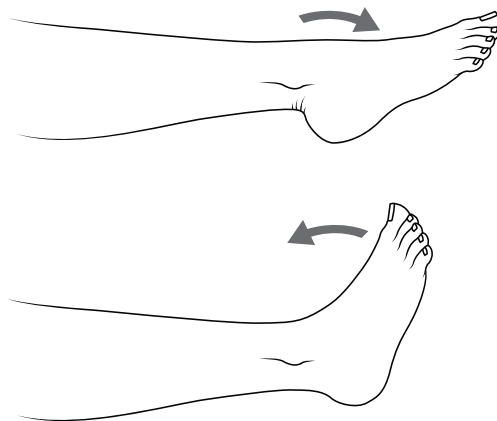
Shoulder flexion

Starting with your arms straight at your sides, lift your arm straight over your head as far as you can and then, slowly lower.



Ankle pumping

Keep your legs straight, switch between pointing your foot down and then up.



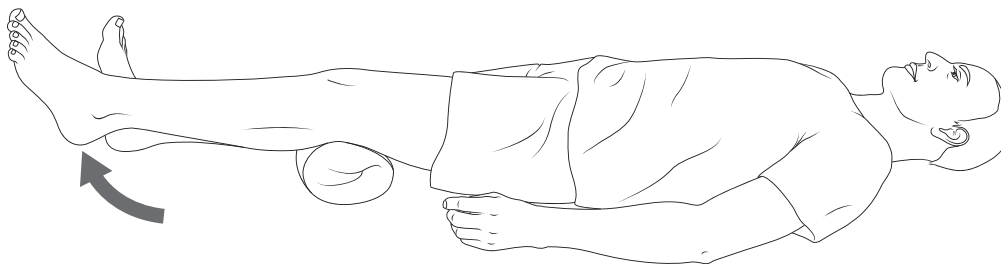
Heels slides

Slide your heel along the bed towards your buttock, bending the knee as much as you can. Then, slide the heel back down until your leg is flat on the bed.



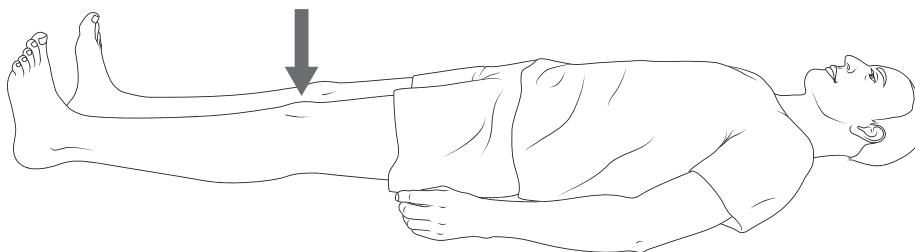
Quads over roll

Use a rolled up pillow behind the knee. Tighten your thigh muscle and lift the heel off the bed, straightening the knee fully. Hold for 5 seconds, then slowly lower your foot back down.



Isometric gluts and quads

Squeeze your buttocks together, and then press the back of the knee down into bed to tighten the muscle on top of your thigh. Hold for 5 seconds.



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