

# Post-Liver Transplant Exercise Program

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It is important to exercise after your liver transplant. This can help you recover and get back to your daily activities.

## Exercise safety

- **Do not** hold your breath while you exercise. Holding your breath raises your risk of bleeding from varices (veins that are bigger than normal).
- Your physiotherapist (PT) will tell you what level of exercises to start with.
- After your surgery, you may have rules about lifting heavy items. Please talk about this with your surgeon.

## Strengthening exercises

- After your transplant, you may have muscle loss. This may be because you were not moving as much while you were in the hospital. It can also be a side effect of some medications. This can make it hard to go back to your daily activities.

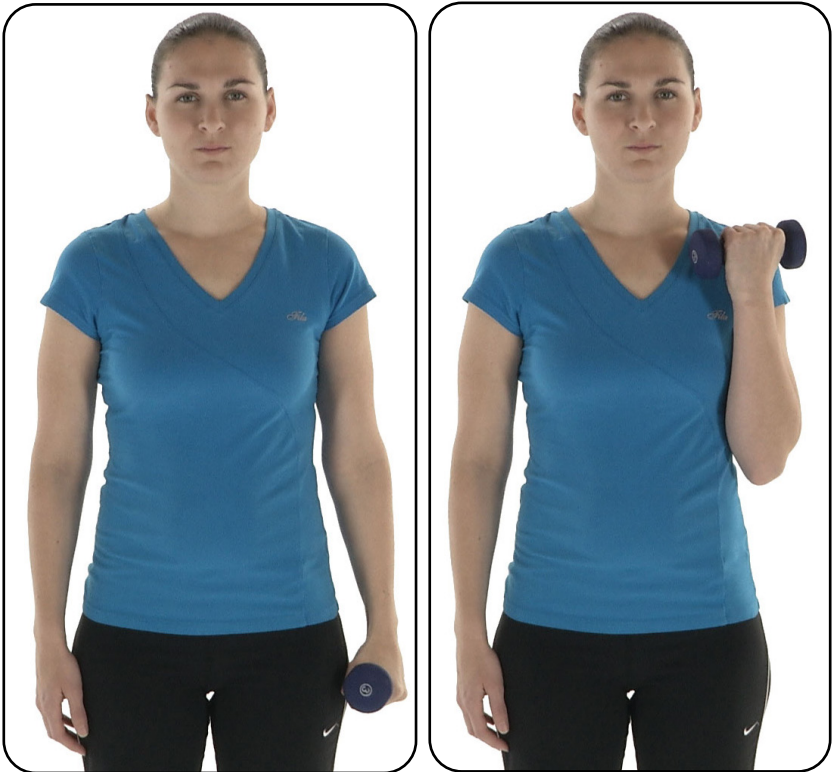
- **Do these exercises at least 3 days a week.**
- Do each exercise 12 times in a row. This is called a **set**. When it gets too easy to do an exercise 12 times:
  - › Add another set of 12 (up to 3 sets).
- When it gets easy to lift a weight:
  - › Add more weight and go back to doing 1 set until it is easy to lift the new amount of weight.
- Once you can easily do 3 sets of all level 1 exercises, you can go to level 2. Stay at each level for at least 7 days (1 week).

## **Arm exercises (level 1)**

- You can do these exercises while sitting or standing. You can do 1 arm at a time, or both arms at the same time.
- For the first 6 exercises, use a weight. If you do not have a weight, you can use a soup can.

## Biceps curls

- Keep your elbow tucked into your side.
- Bend your arm up until your hand touches your shoulder.
- Then slowly lower it.
- Repeat 12 times.



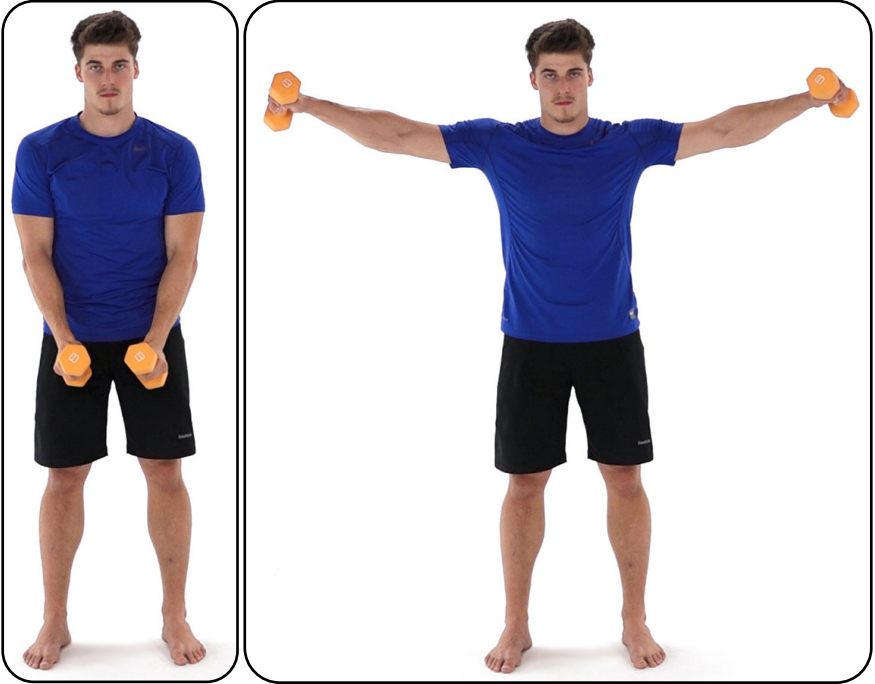
## Shoulder press

- Push the weight up over your head.
- Then slowly lower it.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Shoulder abduction

- Lift your arm out to the side to shoulder height.
- Then slowly lower it.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Triceps extension

- Straight your arm and raise your arm behind you.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Arm exercises (level 2)

### Biceps curls

- Keep your elbow tucked into your side.
- Bend your arm up until your hand touches your shoulder.
- Then slowly lower it.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Shoulder press

- Push the weight up over your head.
- Then slowly lower it.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Chair triceps dips

- Sit on a chair with your hands on the armrests.
- Push into the armrests, straightening your arms. Try not to use your legs to push.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Counter push-up

- Stand facing a counter. Put both hands on the counter. Then take 1 step backwards.
- Bend your elbows as you lean forward, so your chest moves towards the counter.
- Then push away from the counter and go back to the starting position.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Leg exercises (level 1)

### Knee extension

- Sit on a chair with both of your feet flat on the floor.
- Slowly straighten 1 leg while keeping your other foot on the floor.
- Hold for 3 seconds.
- Then slowly lower your leg.
- Repeat 12 times for each leg.



## Hip flexion

- Sit on a chair with both of your feet flat on the floor.
- Slowly raise 1 knee a few inches above the other knee while keeping your other foot flat on the floor.
- Hold for 3 seconds.
- Then slowly lower your leg.
- Repeat 12 times for each leg.



## Sit to stand

- Sit on a chair with both of your feet flat on the floor.
- Stand up.
- Then slowly sit down.
- Use your arms, if needed.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Leg exercises (level 2)

### Glute bridge

- Lie on the floor on your back with your knees bent.
- Gently flatten your back against the floor by imagining you are trying to pull your 2 pelvic bones together. Try to hold this position while you do the exercise.
- Then squeeze your glutes (bum) together and lift your hips off the ground. Do this until your legs and back are in a straight line.
- Hold for 3 seconds. Then slowly lower yourself to the starting position.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Chair squat

- Stand in front of a chair with your back towards the chair.
- Slowly squat down (bend your knees while keeping your back straight) until your bum touches the chair.
- Then stand up.
- Use your arms, if needed.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Supported calf raises

- Stand next to a chair or a counter.
- Slowly lift yourself up on your toes.
- Then slowly lower yourself to the starting position.
- Repeat 12 times.



## Leg exercises (level 3)

- Keep doing the exercises from level 2 and add the following:

### Side lunge

- Stand with your legs wider than your hips.
- Lean to 1 side over your foot and bend that knee to squat down.
- Repeat 12 times on each side.



## Chair mountain climber

- Place a chair in front of you. Put your hands on the seat or grip the sides of the seat.
- Form a straight line with your body (a plank position).
- While keeping your body stable and your abdomen (stomach area) tight, lift 1 knee to your chest.
- Repeat 12 times on each side.



## Cardiovascular (cardio) exercises

- Cardio exercises are important to make your heart, lungs, and muscles stronger. They include activities like walking and stationary biking.

### How often should I do cardio exercises?

- After your liver transplant, you may have a hard time walking long distances.
- You should start by walking for 5 to 15 minutes at a time. Add 5 minutes to each walk as you are comfortable. Keep doing this until you are walking for 30 minutes (half an hour) at a time.
- Do cardio exercises at least **5 days a week**.
- **You should not have trouble breathing while exercising.** If you cannot comfortably talk while walking, slow down or stop to rest.

## Remember:

- **Warm up and cool down when you exercise.**  
This means to start and end your exercise with slower, more gentle activity. This lets your body get ready to exercise and recover from exercise. For example:
  - › If you walk for 30 minutes, the first 5 minutes and last 5 minutes should be at a slower pace.
- **Moving throughout the day is also very important.** Exercise alone will not improve your strength if you are resting for most of the day. It is important to take part in daily activities as you can (like self-care, housework, errands). Self-care includes bathing, grooming, dressing, and going to the bathroom.
- **Save your energy.** It is important to balance rest and activity to keep from feeling too tired after exercising. Plan your day so you do the most important tasks first.
- If it is getting hard to walk, you may want to think about getting a walking aid (like a walker or a cane). Please talk with your doctor or transplant coordinator about this, if needed.
- Find an activity that you enjoy. You will be more likely to keep doing it.

## Contact:

- If you have any questions or concerns about your exercise program, please contact your post-transplant coordinator.

## Notes:

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[www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources](http://www.nshealth.ca/patient-education-resources)

Connect with a registered nurse in Nova Scotia any time:  
Call 811 or visit: <https://811.novascotia.ca>

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