

Advice for patients requiring an intra-aortic balloon pump (IABP)

Patient information sheet

What is an intra-aortic balloon pump (IABP)?

An IABP is a mechanical circulatory device used to help improve the heart function so that it can pump blood around your body more effectively. The machine is attached to you by a thin catheter inserted through a blood vessel in your groin. This catheter is then fed into your heart and has a balloon at the end of it which inflates and deflates in time with your heart beat.

Why do I need an IABP?

You may need an IABP if your heart is struggling to pump blood around your body. It may also be used to help support your heart before or after heart surgery or a heart transplant.

Movement restrictions

There are some movements you must not do. This helps to avoid the catheter dislodging or becoming kinked. These restrictions apply only to the leg the catheter is in. You have no restrictions on movement of your arms or the other leg unless you are told so by staff.

- You must only lie in bed with the head inclined to a maximum of 45 degrees
- You must avoid bending or twisting your hip

Exercises

Deep breathing exercises are very important. These help to avoid any respiratory complications whilst you are unable to move around. Take a long, slow breath in through your nose and then sigh out of your mouth (as if you were steaming up a mirror). Perform four to five of these breaths one after the other every hour. Follow this with a strong cough to help to clear any phlegm.

Both legs: repeat each exercise 10 to 15 times

	Ankle pumps: Point your toes straight up as far as you can then straight down as far as you can.
	Static quads: Press your knee into the bed, hold for five seconds.
	Hip abduction: Point your toes towards you as far as you can and push your knee into the bed. Slide your leg to the side then back to the middle. Repeat with your other leg.

Non-IABP leg only: repeat each exercise 10-15 times

	Straight leg raise: Lift your leg off the bed, hold for five seconds.
	Knee bends: Slide your heel to your bottom bending your knee as far as possible and then straighten your knee.

Further information

These exercises should not be painful or make you breathless, please stop the exercises if they do. If you have any concerns or questions please talk to your physiotherapist.

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