

# Exercises for myeloma patients

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## Living well with myeloma Infosheet

**This Infosheet describes exercises suitable for myeloma patients and includes some safety tips.**

Gentle, regular exercise has been shown to be helpful for myeloma patients, particularly for managing fatigue, supporting mental wellbeing and coping with other side effects.

Although exercise is helpful, your healthcare team may have suggested restricting some of your previous physical activities if you have myeloma bone disease. This is because your bones may fracture

more easily than normal, so some activities that put more stress on your bones can be risky.



For more information about myeloma bone disease see the **Myeloma bone disease Infoguide** from Myeloma UK

This Infosheet contains a range of gentle exercises that can help you build and maintain your fitness and strength in a way

that is suitable and safe for most myeloma patients, to help you keep living well.



For more information about other aspects of living well, as well as more on the benefits of exercise, see the **Infopack for living well with myeloma** from Myeloma UK

As a rough guide, you should aim to do some of the exercises suggested below every few days, (approximately three times a week). They can be done on the same day that you go for a walk or do any other gentle exercise, but you should avoid doing them 2 days in a row to allow your body time to recover.

You do not need to attempt all the exercises straight away. Try to build up gradually. It is important that you learn the correct technique for each exercise first, to avoid putting extra strain on your bones and posture or causing injury. First try the exercises with your physiotherapist to make sure you have mastered the correct technique. A good rule of thumb is if it hurts then don't do it.

You will know that your fitness and strength are improving if you can complete a set of exercises without struggling. Our muscles are very responsive and you are likely to notice an increase in strength within a few weeks.

Only complete the recommended number of repetitions for each exercise in this Infosheet, to start with. Over time, you might be able to increase the number of repetitions gradually, if you feel your strength and balance improve.

Some of the exercises in this Infosheet need simple pieces of equipment. You will need:

- A chair
- A resistance exercise band, or a belt if you don't have an exercise band
- A light set of hand weights. Speak to your physiotherapist about a weight that is suitable for you. If you do not have any weights, cans of soup or beans make a suitable alternative

The exercises in this booklet are divided into the following groups:

- Resistance exercises (pages 5–7)
- Strength exercises (pages 8–19)
- Balance exercises (pages 20–23)

If you prefer to work on one area of the body at a time, you can check which exercises work on which parts of the body below. Remember that you will get the most benefit from the exercises by working through them all regularly.

### **Different exercises strengthen different parts of the body.**

If you prefer to exercise one area of the body at a time, you can use this contents table to check which exercises are useful for each session.

#### **Arms:**

Upper back strength – 1 . . .	<b>6</b>
Upper back strength – 2 . . .	<b>7</b>
Wall pushups . . . . .	<b>11</b>
Tricep curls . . . . .	<b>16</b>
Bicep curls . . . . .	<b>17</b>
Upright row . . . . .	<b>18</b>
Upward reach balance . . .	<b>23</b>

#### **Back, chest and core:**

Upper back strength – 1 . . .	<b>6</b>
Upper back strength – 2 . . .	<b>7</b>
Step-ups . . . . .	<b>8</b>
Wall pushups . . . . .	<b>11</b>
Tiptoe walking . . . . .	<b>20</b>
Heel-toe tandem stance . .	<b>21</b>
One-legged flamingo . . . .	<b>22</b>
Upward reach balance . . .	<b>23</b>

#### **Neck and shoulders:**

Wall pushups . . . . .	<b>11</b>
Shoulder stretch . . . . .	<b>14</b>
Neck stretch . . . . .	<b>15</b>
Upright row . . . . .	<b>18</b>
Shoulder shrugs . . . . .	<b>19</b>
Upward reach balance . . .	<b>23</b>

#### **Legs and ankles:**

Seated leg press . . . . .	<b>5</b>
Step-ups . . . . .	<b>8</b>
Leg curls . . . . .	<b>9</b>
Leg extension . . . . .	<b>10</b>
Calf stretch . . . . .	<b>12</b>
Ankle stretch . . . . .	<b>13</b>
Tiptoe walking . . . . .	<b>20</b>
Heel-toe tandem stance . .	<b>21</b>
One-legged flamingo . . . .	<b>22</b>
Upward reach balance . . .	<b>23</b>

## Exercise safety tips

- Always speak to your healthcare team before starting any exercise programme or ask to be referred to a physiotherapist
- Avoid public gyms/swimming pools if you are at a higher risk of infection. This can occur if your white blood cell count is low, because of complications of myeloma, side effects of some treatments and/or high-dose therapy and stem cell transplant (HDT-SCT)
- Minimise activities which have an increased risk of falling or jarring such as walking on uneven ground, especially if you have any altered sensation or numbness in your feet caused by peripheral neuropathy
- Avoid lifting heavy weights
- Wear supportive, laced shoes that fit well for exercising and make sure your clothing does not trail on the ground
- Always make sure your exercise space is clear and free of clutter
- Stop to rest if you are feeling breathless, don't push yourself too hard
- Stop immediately if you feel any new or increasing pain and let your healthcare team know
- Build up gradually, a 'little and often' approach to exercising is best
- Pace yourself and listen to your body

# 1. Resistance exercises

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These exercises can help with everyday activities such as walking, climbing stairs and getting in and out of bed.

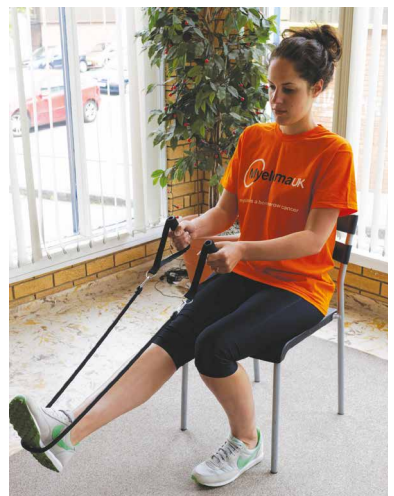
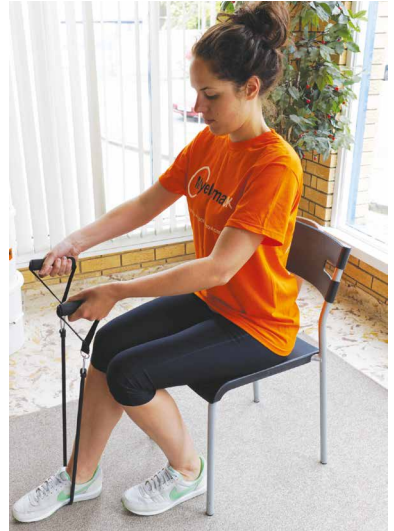
## Seated leg press

### Instructions

1. Sit on a chair, with your bottom at the back of the seat
2. Loop the band under the ball of one foot
3. Lift your foot off the floor with your heel away from the chair
4. Stretch and keep your hands level with your hips
5. Lengthen your leg, pushing your heel towards the floor
6. Hold the stretch for 2–3 seconds and release
7. Draw your leg back inwards
8. Release your hands
9. Put your foot down on the floor
10. Repeat five times

### Tips

- Make sure you keep your chest lifted throughout
- Avoid locking your knee



## Upper back strength – 1

### Instructions

1. Sit on the front third of your chair
2. Ensure your stomach is drawn into the spine
3. Lift your toes and place the band flat under both feet
4. Pull and hold the band under resistance at the knee joint
5. Lift the band above your knees
6. Squeeze in your stomach muscles and lean back in your chair
7. Hold the stretch for 2–3 seconds and release
8. Repeat five times
9. Return to the starting position

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can
- Distribute your weight evenly through both feet
- Keep your eye gaze forward



## Upper back strength – 2

### Instructions

1. Sit on the front third of your chair
2. Hold the band in both hands
3. Tuck your elbows into your side and keep the palms of your hands facing upwards
4. Pull the band slightly to create tension
5. Pull your elbows backwards, pulling the band towards your belly button
6. Set your hands wider – squeezing your shoulder blades together
7. Hold for 2–3 seconds and release
8. Repeat five times
9. Return to the starting position

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can
- Keep your eye gaze forward
- Concentrate on maintaining your posture and alignment
- Keep your wrists still and upright



## 2. Strength exercises

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These exercises will also help with everyday activities such as walking, climbing stairs and getting in and out of bed.

### Step-ups

#### Instructions

1. Stand facing a staircase or a step. Hold the handrail for balance if you need to
2. Step up with your right foot, then up with your left to the same step
3. Step back down onto the floor, first with your right foot and then with your left
4. Repeat five times leading with your right foot
5. Rest for approximately 10 seconds
6. Switch legs, stepping up with your left foot first this time and repeat as above

#### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can
- Keep your eye gaze forward
- Reduce the rest period between repetitions if you feel up to it
- Make sure you do grip a handrail and take your time if you feel unstable





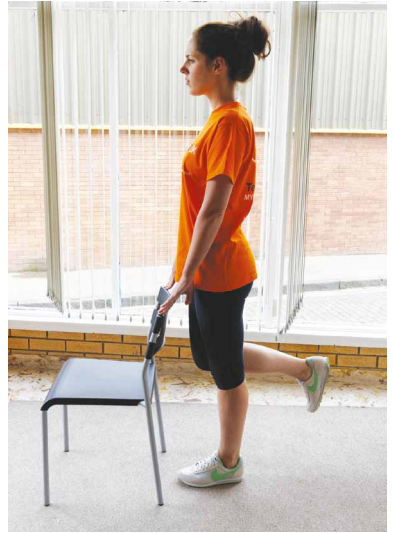
## Leg curls

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight and hold onto a table or the back of a chair for balance if you need to
2. Bend your right knee, bringing your heel towards your bottom
3. Keep your bent knee pointing down and the upper half of your leg still
4. Slowly lower your foot back to the ground
5. Repeat five times
6. Rest for a few seconds
7. Repeat with your left leg

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can
- Keep your eye gaze forward
- Reduce the rest period between repetitions if you feel up to it



## Leg extension

### Instructions

1. Sit on a chair, with your bottom at the back of the seat
2. Straighten your right leg, lifting it off the ground
3. Point your toes towards the ceiling
4. Hold for 5 seconds
5. Release your leg back to a resting position
6. Repeat five times
7. Rest for a few seconds
8. Repeat with your left leg

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can against the back of the chair
- Keep your eye gaze forward
- Reduce the rest period between repetitions if you feel up to it



## Wall pushups

### Instructions

1. Stand approximately arms-length away from a wall, with feet shoulder-width apart
2. Place the palms of your hands flat on the wall at shoulder level, with fingers pointing up. Your hands should be slightly wider than your shoulders
3. Keeping your back as straight as possible, bend your elbows, moving your body trunk towards the wall slowly
4. Push back against the wall to your starting position
5. Repeat five times

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can
- The further you stand from the wall, the more difficult this exercise will be. You might want to start standing closer to the wall if it's too difficult
- You can also increase the difficulty of the exercise by holding your body towards the wall for 5 seconds before you push back towards the starting position



## Calf stretch

### Instructions

1. Stand approximately arms-length away from a wall, with feet shoulder-width apart
2. Place hands against the wall, shoulder-width apart with your arms straight
3. Step back about 30 cm with your right foot, keeping your arms on the wall
4. Keep both heels and feet flat on the floor, facing forwards
5. Hold position for 3–4 seconds and release
6. Bring your right leg forwards so that it is level with your left
7. Repeat five times
8. Change legs, moving your left leg back 30 cm and repeat as above



### Tips

- The further you stand from the wall, the more difficult this exercise will be. You might want to start standing closer to the wall if it's too difficult and then gradually increase the distance as you get used to the exercise
- If you cannot keep your heel to the ground, only step back about 20 cm

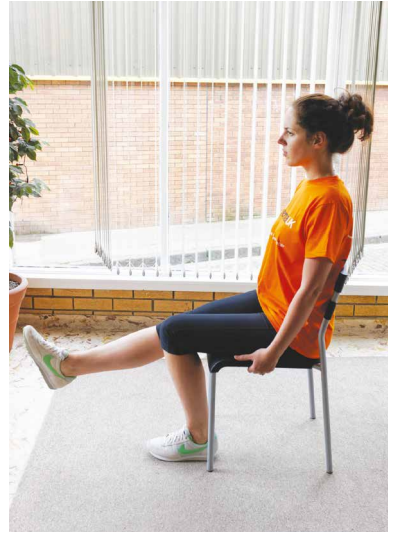
## Ankle stretch

### Instructions

1. Sit on a chair, with your bottom at the back of the seat and keep your back straight
2. Hold on to the side of the chair for support if you need to
3. Keeping your left foot flat on the floor, extend your right leg out in front of you off the floor
4. Keeping your toes pointing towards the ceiling, rotate your ankle around in one full rotation
5. Switch and rotate your ankle in the other direction
6. Repeat five times in each direction
7. Put your right leg back on the floor and repeat the exercise with your left leg

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can
- Keep your resting foot flat on the floor



## Shoulder stretch

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart
2. Bring your right arm across your body, holding the back of your right elbow with your left hand
3. Gently pull your right elbow towards your left side so that your right hand extends beyond your left shoulder
4. Hold the stretch for 2–3 seconds
5. Release and rest your arm back at your side
6. Repeat five times
7. Change arms and repeat the exercise with your left arm and repeat five times

### Tips

- Keep your feet flat on the floor
- Distribute your weight evenly throughout both feet



## Neck stretch

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart, or sit comfortably in a chair with your back straight, whichever is most comfortable for you
2. Place both your arms at your side
3. Gently tilt your neck to the right side, moving your right ear towards your right shoulder
4. Hold the stretch for 2–3 seconds
5. Slowly return your head to normal position and then repeat
6. Repeat five times
7. Repeat the exercise five times on your left hand side moving your left ear towards your left shoulder

### Tips

- Keep your feet flat on the floor
- Distribute your weight evenly throughout both feet



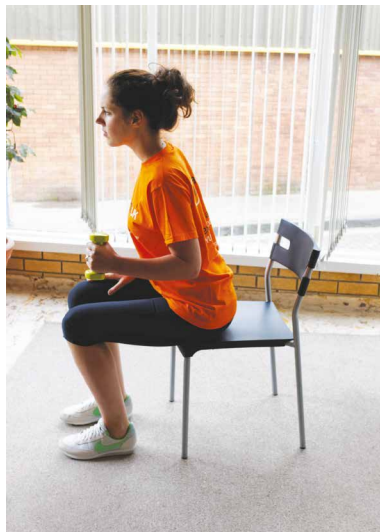
## Tricep curls

### Instructions

1. Sit on a chair, with your bottom at the back of the seat and keep your back straight
2. Lean forward, keep both your feet flat and support your body by placing your left hand on your knee
3. Hold a weight in your right hand with your palm facing in towards your body
4. Make sure your right arm is fully extended
5. Bend your elbow at a right angle, keeping your elbow at your side drawing the weight towards your chin
6. Slowly straighten your arm until it is resting again
7. Repeat five times
8. Swap the weight to your left hand and repeat with other arm

### Tips

- To increase the difficulty of the exercise, when your elbow is at a right angle hold the position for 3–4 seconds before releasing and extending your arm





## Bicep curls

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart, or sit on a chair, whichever is most comfortable for you
2. Keep your back straight
3. Keep your feet flat on the floor, shoulder-width apart
4. Hold the weights, one in each hand with your palms facing upwards
5. Slowly bend both of your elbows, drawing the weights towards your shoulders
6. Hold this position for 3–4 seconds
7. Slowly lower your arms to starting position
8. Rest for a few seconds
9. Repeat five times

### Tips

- It is important to keep your elbows tucked into your side while you do this exercise. It may help to gently press your elbows and upper arms against your side and rib cage
- If you are unable to lift the weight without moving your elbow out to the side or swinging it forward, you should try a lighter weight
- Repeat the exercise five times to begin with, increasing the repetitions gradually if you feel up to it



## Upright row

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart
2. Hold the weights in each hand with your palms facing in towards you
3. Bend your elbows and raise your arms, drawing the weights up towards your chin
4. Your elbows should be level with your shoulders
5. Hold your arms up for 1–2 seconds
6. Lower your arms slowly back down to starting position
7. Repeat five times

### Tips

- To increase the difficulty of the exercise, when your elbows are at shoulder height hold the position for 4–5 seconds before lowering your arms



## Shoulder shrugs

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight or sit on a chair with your back straight, whichever is the most comfortable for you
2. Hold a weight in each hand with your arms hanging at your side
3. Your palms should be facing in towards you
4. Pull your shoulders up towards your ears
5. Hold for 3–4 seconds
6. Slowly lower your arms and rest your shoulders
7. Repeat five times

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can



# 3. Balance exercises

These exercises can help to improve balance and reduce the risk of falling.

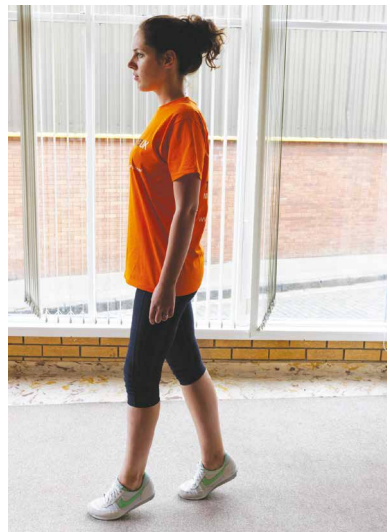
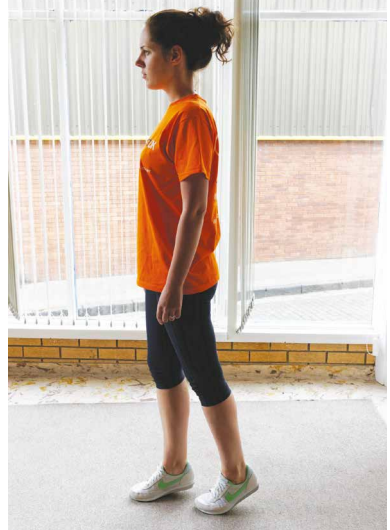
## Tiptoe walking – with or without support

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold onto a table or the back of a chair for balance if you need to
2. Your feet should be flat on the ground
3. Step up on to your tiptoes on both feet
4. Walk up to 10 steps on the spot on your tiptoes
5. Lower your heels to the ground
6. Repeat five times

### Tips

- Keep your back as straight as you can



## Heel-toe tandem stance – with or without support

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight. Hold onto a table or the back of a chair for balance if you need to
2. Place your right foot directly in front of your left so that your feet are in a straight line
3. Hold this position for 2–3 seconds
4. Repeat five times
5. Change feet so that your left foot is now in front of your right foot and repeat as above

### Tips

- Ensure that your weight is distributed evenly through both feet
- Draw your stomach in towards your spine, keeping your shoulders down
- Keep your eye gaze forward



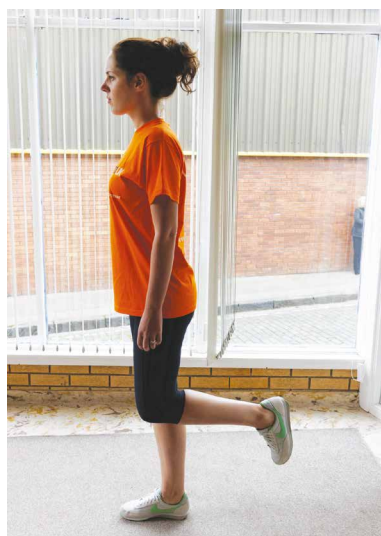
## One-legged flamingo – with or without support

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight. Hold onto a table or the back of a chair for balance if you need to
2. Stand on your left leg, bending your knee, bring your right leg up at a 90 degree angle
3. Keep your toes pointing towards the floor and hold for 2–3 seconds
4. Place your right foot back on the floor
5. Repeat five times
6. Change feet and repeat as above

### Tips

- Keep your back straight
- Keep your eye gaze forward



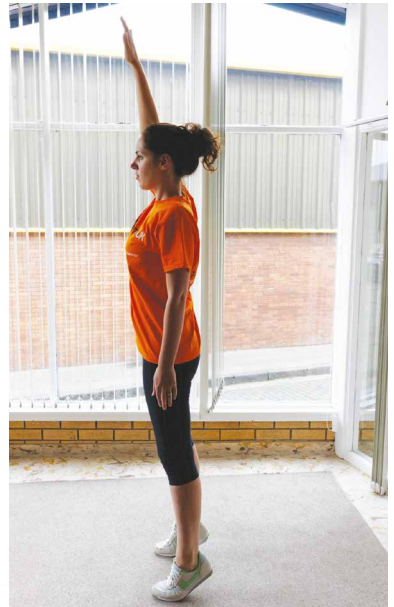
## Upward reach balance – with or without support

### Instructions

1. Stand up straight with your feet shoulder-width apart. Hold onto a table or the back of a chair for balance if you need to
2. Move your right arm above your head with the palm of your hand facing forwards
3. While your arm is raised, stand onto the balls of your feet so that you are on your tiptoes
4. Hold for 2–3 seconds
5. Slowly lower your heels to the floor
6. Keeping your arm in the air repeat five times moving up on to your tips toes
7. Lower your arm back to your side and rest for approximately 10 seconds
8. Raise your left arm and repeat the exercise as above five times

### Tips

- Ensure that your weight is distributed evenly through both feet
- Keep your back straight
- Keep your eye gaze forward



## About this Infosheet

The information in this Infosheet is not meant to replace the advice of your healthcare team. They are the people to ask if you have questions about your individual situation.

For a list of references used to develop our resources, visit [myeloma.org.uk/references](https://myeloma.org.uk/references)

We value your feedback about our patient information.

For a short online survey go to [myeloma.org.uk/pifeedback](https://myeloma.org.uk/pifeedback) or email comments to [myelomauk@myeloma.org.uk](mailto:myelomauk@myeloma.org.uk)

## Other information available from Myeloma UK

Myeloma UK has a range of information booklets available covering all aspects of myeloma and related conditions.

Download or order them from [myeloma.org.uk/publications](https://myeloma.org.uk/publications)

To talk to one of our Myeloma Information Specialists about any aspect of myeloma, call our Myeloma Infoline on **0800 980 3332** or **1800 937 773** from Ireland.

The Infoline is open from Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and is free to phone from anywhere in the UK and Ireland.

Information and support about myeloma is also available around the clock at [myeloma.org.uk](https://myeloma.org.uk)



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We're here for everything  
a diagnosis of myeloma brings

Get in touch to find out more about how we can support you

Call the Myeloma Infoline on

 **0800 980 3332**

Email Ask the Nurse at

 **AskTheNurse@myeloma.org.uk**

Visit our website at

 **myeloma.org.uk**



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