

GUIDE

After GBS — Exercise

This series of guides is produced by the Guillain-Barré Syndrome Support Group. We are a registered charity that supports those affected by the Guillain-Barré syndrome (GBS) and related conditions in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland. The related conditions include chronic inflammatory demyelinating polyradiculoneuropathy (CIDP) and Miller Fisher syndrome (MFS).

Our guides are easily downloaded from our Web site at www.gbs.org.uk in PDF format and may be both read and printed using free Adobe Reader software. Alternatively, you can request printed copies from our office.

For information and support, ring our helpline on 0800 374 803

In the Republic of Ireland, call 0044 1529 415278

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The severity of both GBS and CIDP can be very variable and this could be said for both the rates and patterns of recovery. You may experience changes or improvements in your residual symptoms for some months, sometimes years after discharge from hospital or rehabilitating unit.

During the recovery stages, physiotherapy, occupational therapy (OT) and speech and language therapy play a vital role in the rehabilitation process, as well as maximising functional ability. At some point during rehabilitation, the rate of recovery will plateau and it is often at this point that patients will be discharged from all the support services (physio, OT, speech and language therapy etc), on which they have relied to a lesser or greater extent, often for long periods. If there are still persistent symptoms at this point, it may be possible to be placed 'on review'. Patients are then followed up on a three- or six-monthly basis, and can ring for advice in-between.

You are likely to be left with a number and variety of residual problems, which no one can predict. Even if you appear symptom-free, simple fatigue will become evident as more activities are taken on and exercise recommenced. Before being discharged by the physiotherapist, seek advice

and request a graduated programme of activity. You are likely to be generally unfit and 'deconditioned' (muscles and joints simply cannot work as strongly as previously). This is true following even short periods of incapacity and inactivity.

Important. Do not attempt to take up their former activities or sports without advice. It is imperative to start slowly and build up. This applies to walking, as much as swimming or working out in the gym: ie one length swimming, two minutes cycling, 100 yards walking, 'gentle' exercise. Never exercise to your maximum ability. All these exercises are excellent provided advice is taken first. Some fitness gyms have a chartered physiotherapist on the premises and advice should be sought.

Exercising too quickly causes fatigue and fitness will not be achieved. If this is allowed to continue, fatigue will become chronic and all the more difficult to overcome. If this happens it is even more important to seek advice, as it will require a change not only in the levels of exercise, but may also necessitate some adaptations to the whole daily life, in order to break out of this cycle.

Notwithstanding the obvious physical benefits, moderate daily exercise can also help to boost the immune system and can make everyone feel better about themselves.

If after reading this guide you still have anxieties and unanswered questions, telephone our helpline on 0800 374803 (UK) or 0033 1529 415278 (RoI). Alternatively, you can e-mail us or register for support on-line

The GBS Support Group is a registered charity and receives neither government nor Lottery funding. If you have found this guide helpful and would like to help us to continue publishing copies for others affected by GBS and its related conditions, please consider making a donation to the Support Group. Secure donations may be made on line. Alternatively you can request a form from our office.

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