

Physical and Occupational Therapy in Sickle Cell Disease

The goal of physical and occupational therapy is to restore how well you are able to move and function on your own, do activities of daily life, and return to doing activities that you enjoy.

What will physical and occupational therapy do?

We will work with you inside and outside the hospital to help you stay active. Each session will be tailored to your current abilities and interests and will require you to take part. Your therapist will:

- Assess your strength, flexibility, mobility, endurance, balance and coordination.
- Assess areas of discomfort and determine whether your muscles and alignment are contributing to your pain.
- Check your range of motion to ensure your joints are healthy.
- Teach your ways to help with pain.
- Check for neurological changes.
- Teach you important exercises and activities to do on your own or with help.
- A physical therapist (“PT”) will help you with moving safely and easily around your environment.
- An occupational therapist (“OT”) will help you with your arm, hand and finger movements; fine motor skills; and daily activities to improve function and well-being and to promote self-care.

Why is exercise important?

- Helps keep your body healthy and mobile
- Improves blood flow and circulation
- Decreases joint stiffness and helps keep you flexible
- Helps prevent acute chest syndrome
- Increases cardiovascular strength
- Decreases risk of swelling and pressure sores
- Improves your attention and focus
- Promotes good mental health, sleep and sense of well-being
- Improves the development of the way your body moves and functions

To Learn More

- Occupational and Physical Therapy
206-987-2113
- Ask your child’s healthcare provider
- seattlechildrens.org

Free Interpreter Services

- In the hospital, ask your nurse.
- From outside the hospital, call the toll-free Family Interpreting Line, 1-866-583-1527. Tell the interpreter the name or extension you need.

What can I do to help my child stay active?

- Encourage them to stay out of bed as much as they can.
- Encourage your child to blow bubbles or use their spirometry device.
- Set up and keep a regular daily routine with your child.
- Keep your child moving and walking many times a day.
- Have your child get dressed and sit up in a chair for play and meals.
- Play games with your child and help them complete their exercises.
- Do fun activities together, like sport activities that have been approved by your doctor, dance, yoga and stretching exercises.
- Draw, paint, color, and write poems with your child.

What if my child needs therapy after we go home?

Your child can continue physical and occupational therapy with us after you leave the hospital. Your child's therapist will work with you and your medical team to see if your child will benefit from having therapy after you go home.