

AXIAL MOBILITY EXERCISE PROGRAM

A HOME EXERCISE PROGRAM TO IMPROVE FUNCTIONAL ABILITY

PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL

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PREFACE

This manual contains a home exercise program which is an integral part of a therapist directed program entitled The Axial Mobility Exercise Program (Schenkman et. al., 1993).* The program is based on several principles which help to distinguish it from many other approaches to exercise and functional training. The first principle is the acknowledgment that loss of mobility of axial structures (i.e. the spine) has a tremendous impact on posture and function. The second principle is that by improving spinal, scapular and pelvic mobility, posture can be regained and movement can be made easier, smoother, and more efficient . A third principle is the relationship between relaxation and deep breathing. Relaxation helps to promote the efficient use of muscles and to increase range of motion, and deep breathing helps to facilitate relaxation. The fourth principle of the exercise program is that the participant learns to incorporate new movement patterns into daily functional activities.

The exercises in this manual are designed to complement the therapist directed program. The therapist and participant work together through the stages of the program, practicing and refining movements. After careful instruction by the therapist and practice by the participant, the therapist decides which exercises are most important for the participant, and assigns them in the home exercise manual. The participant should be independent in an individualized set of exercises, including practice of functional activities. The exercises and movement patterns learned in this program should become an integral part of each participant's lifestyle.

A manual for therapists is available. For more information call 1 (800) 672-4213

*Schenkman, Keysor, Chandler, Laub, and MacAller: Axial Mobility Exercise Program: An Exercise Program to Improve Functional Ability. Claude D. Pepper Older Americans Independence Center, Duke University, 1993.

INTRODUCTION

This home exercise program is divided into two segments. The first part is referred to as "floor exercises" which consists of a daily fifteen minute exercise session in which you will practice specific exercises that your therapist assigns you. The second part, labeled "dynamic activities", refers to normal everyday activities that you will practice using new movements. Once you learn the new movements, you will automatically perform the activity that way without having to concentrate on it. New "floor exercises" will be assigned each week as your fifteen minute daily homework assignment. In addition, you will be asked to concentrate on one new dynamic activity each week. You will try to practice this dynamic activity in the "new" way your therapist instructed you every time you ordinarily perform that activity during the day.

The goals of the exercises are to teach you to move in a relaxed manner, and to improve your flexibility, postural alignment and general mobility. Here are some key points which you should remember as you are learning and practicing the exercises:

- It is important to achieve relaxation first.
Only work to increase range of motion within a relaxed state.
This will allow you to achieve greater changes in your flexibility.
- Slow, deep, relaxed breaths are very important in helping your muscles relax.
- If you feel you are "fighting" your muscles, then you are stretching too hard or trying too hard.
You should decrease your efforts.
- The order of these exercises is important.
Please follow the exercises in the order in which your therapist instructed you.
- There is no precise number of repetitions for each exercise.
The exercises should be done until you feel you have reached optimal relaxation and range of motion.
Typically, 5 or 6 repetitions is adequate, but this may vary with each exercise.
- To enhance the effectiveness of the exercises, be sure to remember to take enough time to let your muscles relax.
Move at a relaxed pace with little effort.
- Occasionally, at the end of a movement, before reversing the direction, take a deep breath in.....then let it out.....and relax even more.