Exercises for Foot and Hand Weakness

Slowing the Effects of Vincristine

What is vincristine?

This is a chemotherapy drug that is injected into a vein. The drug slows or stops the growth of cancer.

Possible side effects

If the drug damages the nerves, you may feel numbness, tingling, pain or muscle weakness in the feet and hands.

What are the signs of weakness?

- You cannot lift your toes off the ground while standing (try tapping your feet).
- You trip often on level ground.
- You drop small objects.
- You feel tired when holding a pencil or typing.
- You feel pain or tightness in the back of your calf when you stand.
- You feel numbness or tingling in the hands and feet.
- Your hands feel weak when holding an object.
- You have trouble with buttons or zippers.

How do exercises help?

Exercise will slow or prevent further weakness. It is important to start this program when you begin treatment.

- Don’t stop until your therapist tells you to, because you may still have side effects after treatment.
- Always check with your oncology provider and/or therapist before changing or progressing your exercise program.
- It is okay to do light exercise regardless of blood counts. If your platelet count is less than 20,000, always talk to your provider before exercising.

Examples of light exercise:
- arm and leg exercises without weights or theraband
- walking
- light housework
Leg exercises

**Ankle pumps**

Relax your leg. Gently bend and straighten the ankle. Move through your full range of motion. Stop if you have pain.

Repeat ____ times.

Do ____ sets. Do ____ sessions a day.

**Heel walk forward**

Standing. Walk on your heels in a straight line.

Repeat ____ times.

Do ____ sessions a day.

**Ankle: Bending with resistance**

Tie one end of tubing onto a door jamb. Tie the other end around the foot. Pull foot toward your face. Return slowly to starting position.

Repeat ____ times.

Do ____ sessions a day.
Ankle: Turning out with resistance

Anchor tubing around your strong foot. Slowly turn the weak foot outward, then return it.

Repeat ____ times.

Do ____ sessions a day.

Calf stretch

Keep back leg straight with heel on floor and turned slightly outward. Lean into wall until you feel a stretch in your calf.

Hold ____ seconds.

Repeat ____ times. Do ____ sessions a day.

One-foot balance

Try to balance on your weak foot with eyes open.
Then try balancing with eyes closed.

Hold ____ seconds / minutes.

Repeat ____ times. Do ____ sessions a day.
Hand exercises

Towel roll squeeze

Rest forearm on a table or other surface.
Gently squeeze towel.

Repeat ____ times. Do ____ sets.
Do ____ sessions a day.

Moving wrist with resistance

With forearm resting palm down on thigh, resist upward movement of hand with the other hand.

Hold ____ seconds. Relax.

Repeat ____ times. Do ____ sessions a day.