



Taking care of your health

Physiotherapy and Prayer (Salah)

Information leaflet for Muslim Patients

“Pray unto me and I
will hear your prayer”
(Holy Qur’an 40:60)

Bradford Teaching Hospitals
NHS Foundation Trust



As well as the spiritual benefits of prayer (Salah) it has been widely recognised that the process of praying promotes many physical and psychological benefits. Each position involves the movement of different parts of the human body in ways that encourage health and wellbeing.

Islam and Physiotherapy

It is a religious obligation to take care of our health. Our bodies and minds are in trust from Allah (God) and this means responsibilities for each of us ourselves. After faith, health and wellbeing are understood to be the greatest blessings to have been given to people and as such they are accountable to Allah.

Physiotherapy aims to improve people's daily life through rehabilitation. Physical rehabilitation involves doing a regular, gentle stretch and strengthen movement programme.

This is very important and helps to decrease the stiffness in joints and muscles. It also increases the strength of the muscles, in order to improve physical fitness. This is necessary to be able to return to activities such as, cooking, housework, prayers (Salah) and work.

What if I can't pray in these positions due to my pain?

Islam allows flexibility in the positions of prayer during illness. As Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) said, "Pray while standing and if you can't, pray while sitting and if you cannot do even that, then pray lying on your side". (Al-Bukhari 2:20, 218).



1. Takbir (standing)

Physical Benefits:

Elbows bent, shoulder joint gently stretched. The shoulder blades and lower back are brought into a helpful neutral position with core muscles active. These muscles help maintain good posture and your physiotherapist can show you exercises to help strengthen these.



2. Qiyam (standing)

Physical Benefits:

Lowering of the hands to the waist, shoulders relaxed, encouraging relaxed breathing. Equal weight through both feet, with core muscles active.



3. Ruku (bowing)

Physical Benefits:

Muscles of the lower back and back of the thighs and calves are fully stretched as the waist is bent. Control of bending the lower back and hips works core muscles, both in forward bending and returning to standing position, as stated in the Hadith, "...until every bone of the spine returns to its regular place". (Al-Bukhari 10:145).

4. Sajdah (prostration)

Physical Benefits:

Lower back flexed, postural neck muscles are working to control neutral head position in lowering down, then lifting from the floor. Weight through the arms requires good control of the shoulder blades and uses the muscles that make the shoulder stable (the rotator cuff). Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) has said "...the nearest a servant comes to his lord is when he is in prostration (Sajdah)". (Al-Bukhari).



5. Tashahhud (sitting)

Physical Benefits:

Muscles at the front of the ankle and foot stretched, with toes extended, knee and hip flexed. Lower back in good posture will help to strengthen core muscles.



6. Peace to the right and left (sitting)

Physical Benefits:

Turning the head to each side improves the range of motion of the neck, stretching muscles with gentle repeated movements.



The benefits of exercise

The process of praying is a low to moderate intensity form of regular exercise lasting 10 to 20 minutes up to five times a day. This raises the heart rate, increasing blood flow around the body and helps to improve the strength and stamina of the heart muscles.

Exercise also promotes the body's release of natural painkillers (endorphins) which can promote feelings of wellbeing and reduce pain.

Other beneficial activities can be combined with prayer, such as walking to the local mosque. This can help patients achieve the recommended weekly exercise levels of 30 minutes a day, at least five times a week. (Department of Health, 2004).

Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) has said "...he who purifies (performs Wudu') himself in his house and then walks to the house of Allah (mosque) for performing an obligatory Salah, one step of his will wipe out his sins and another step will elevate his rank in paradise (Jannah)". (Muslim).

The benefits of relaxation

The process of praying has also been shown to help bring about a natural "relaxation response" (Benson and Klipper, 2000). This helps to reduce the levels of stress which are often linked to illness and pain. Muscles can become less tense, hormones such as adrenaline are less active and the nervous system is less stimulated which can have beneficial effects on blood pressure, heart rate and levels of stress and anxiety. The calming effects of prayer are illustrated in the hadith, "Prayer is the coolness of my eyes". (Ahmad).

Further Information

If you have any questions about physiotherapy and prayer (Salah) please ask your therapist.

Smoking

Bradford Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is a smoke-free organisation. You are not permitted to smoke in any of the hospital buildings or grounds, with the exception of the smoking shelters which are provided for visitors and patients only.

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