

Box 1. Exercise instructions.

- ▶ For the stretching exercise the nurse gave patients the following instruction:

'First remove your shoes, then stand facing a wall 2 to 3 feet away so that the tips of your fingers are just touching the wall. Lean forward keeping your heels in contact with the floor, keep your body straight and use your arms to control your forward tilt until you feel a moderately intense, but not painful, 'pulling sensation' in your calf muscles. This stretching position should be held for 10 seconds (count 1 elephant, 2 elephants, etc.). Stand upright and relax for 5 seconds, then repeat the stretch for a further 10 seconds. Carry out this sequence three times spread through each day'.

- ▶ For the non-stretching exercise the nurse advised patients as follows:

'First lie face up on your bed or on the floor so that your legs are out straight. Gently bend your knees up and move them towards your chest keeping your feet flat on the bed or floor. When your feet are as near your bottom as you can get them without causing discomfort, hold that position for 10 seconds (count 1 elephant, 2 elephants, etc.). Straighten your legs out and relax for 5 seconds then repeat the exercise for a further 10 seconds. Carry out this sequence three times spread through each day'.