

Patient information

Post Operative Physiotherapy

Therapies Department

This leaflet aims to prevent complications following your operation and assist in a speedy recovery.

It will:

- Explain the effects of a general anaesthetic.
- Outline your breathing exercises.
- Advise you on what to expect during your stay in hospital and when you go home.

Why is physiotherapy important?

Anaesthetic gas can irritate your lungs. This causes an increase in the amount of phlegm they produce. This phlegm needs to be cleared to prevent any areas of your lung collapsing, and decreasing the risk of a chest infection.

What should I do?

Deep breathing exercises help to prevent the small air sacs in your lungs collapsing. It is important to get into a good, comfortable position to do these, i.e. sitting upright.

1. Take a slow, deep breath in through your nose.
2. Hold for a count of three seconds.
3. Then breathe out gently through your mouth.
4. As you breathe in your stomach should rise slightly and fall as you breathe out.
5. Do three to four breaths at a time.

Huffing will help to clear any phlegm. To produce a huff you should take a small breath in and then force all of the air out of an open mouth. Imagine you are steaming up a mirror.

Coughing is an important way of clearing any phlegm after your operation. Although you may feel discomfort when coughing, it will decrease the risk of developing a chest infection.

We advise that before you cough you take your painkillers, bend your knees up, and apply some pressure over your wound with your hands, or a folded towel or blanket. You should aim to do your breathing exercises every half an hour.

Circulation exercises should be started after your operation. Circle your ankles for 20-30 seconds, bend and straighten your knees, and repeat as often as possible.

When will I get out of bed?

One or two days after your operation, the physiotherapists will help you out of bed to sit in a chair. Drips and drains do not prevent this.

To get out of bed:

- Bend your knees up.
- Roll onto your side.
- Drop your legs over the edge of the bed.
- Push yourself up into a sitting position (with your arms).

We will also encourage you with walking after your operation, to help clear any phlegm and improve your circulation. You may need assistance with your walking at first but we will be on hand to help. When walking you need to stand tall, you may feel a pull on your scar but this is completely normal.

Before going home, you may also need to practice climbing stairs.

What happens when I go home?

For the journey home we advise that you have a couple of pillows with you, one to sit on, and one between you and the seat belt.

- **Rest:** Try and rest for one hour after lunch as tiredness can cause depression.
- **Emotions:** Short periods of depression are normal (24-48 hours).
- **Sex:** It is important to make sure you are fully healed, so it is advisable to wait until after your six-week check-up.
- **Driving:** About four to six weeks after your operation depending upon your rate of recovery. Ask yourself can I concentrate and do an emergency stop? Also, check your insurance cover and take someone with you the first time.
- **Lifting:** Bend your knees, keep your back straight, and pull your stomach in. Do not lift heavy objects.
- **Housework:** Kneel to make the bed. Sit to prepare meals and when ironing.
- **Sport:** Do not start competitive sport or energetic activity until three months. Start with walking, ten minutes a day and build up slowly your pace and length of walk. Swimming is also an excellent way to improve your fitness but not until after your six week check-up.

Within six to twelve weeks, you should be able to do everything you want to with the exception of heavy lifting.

Feedback

Your feedback is important to us and helps us influence care in the future.

Following your discharge from hospital or attendance at your outpatient appointment you will receive a text asking if you would recommend our service to others. Please take the time to text back, you will not be charged for the text and can opt out at any point. Your co-operation is greatly appreciated.

Further Information

Physiotherapy Department

Tel: 0151 706 2000 Ext 3092

Text phone number: 18001 0151 706 2000 Ext 3092

Author: Therapies Department

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