

Physiotherapy

Physiotherapy after surgery

After surgery there are risks that may mean you produce phlegm and be 'chestier' than usual. This can be due to the anaesthetic, pain from the incision, and reduced activity after surgery.

Physiotherapy techniques are an important part of your recovery. If phlegm remains in the lungs, it provides an ideal environment for bacteria to grow and for chest infections to develop. A chest infection can prolong and complicate your hospital stay.

There are a number of simple exercises and measures that you can take to help reduce the risk of this. The below advice is to help you keep your chest clear.

Breathing exercises and coughing

You need to start doing breathing exercises as soon as possible as these help to re-expand the lungs after the anaesthetic. Ideally, you will start the exercises within the first few hours after you wake up from surgery.

Deep breathing and coughing may feel uncomfortable, but you will not cause any damage to stitches or clips. It's very important that you can cough strongly and effectively after surgery.

To help strengthen your cough and ease any pain, support your wound with a clean rolled towel over the top of your clothing.



Patient Information

To do the breathing exercises:

- Sit upright in bed or preferably in an armchair.
- Take a deep breathe in, preferably through your nose, hold for 5 seconds and breathe out gently through your mouth.
- Repeat 6 times.

To cough:

- Support your wound with a rolled towel.
- Cough strongly from your stomach not your throat.
- You may or may not cough up some phlegm. If you cough up some phlegm spit it into a pot or tissue and repeat the cycle until you are not coughing up phlegm.
- Rest and repeat the breathing exercises every hour.

Repeat the breathing exercises and coughing for the first few days after surgery. You may stop them when you can walk a moderate distance on the ward, for example to the bathroom, as long as you are not coughing up any phlegm.

Position in bed

When you are in bed, make sure you are always in a good position. This means sitting upright or lying on each side alternately.

Do not slump in bed.

Walking

The most important thing after surgery is to get out of bed and walk as soon as possible. This is best way to prevent a chest infection.

The nurses will help you to sit on a chair and walk on the ward as soon as your condition allows. This could be on the day of surgery depending on the procedure you had. It's normal to have oxygen, drips and drains attached – these will not stop you getting out of bed.

Patient Information

We will continue to help you every day until you can get up by yourself. Once you can walk safely on your own, you are expected to gradually increase the distance you can walk daily.

Sit out of bed at regular intervals and complete regular short walks during the day.

Pain

Make sure your pain is under control. You may have some discomfort, but you should be able to deep breathe, cough, and move around after surgery.

If your pain is stopping you from doing this, tell the nursing staff so they can review your pain relief.

Rest

Although you should get up and move around regularly, it's also important to rest to aid your recovery.

If you have any questions or worries about your exercises, ask your nurse for advice.

The Trust has access to interpreting and translation services. If you need this Information in another language or format, please contact the ward staff and we will do our best to meet your needs.

The Trust operates a smokefree policy.

Patient Information

Did we get it right?

We would like you to tell us what you think about our services. This helps us to make further improvements and to recognise members of staff who provide a good service.



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Document History

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