

Physiotherapy Department

Physiotherapy Following Surgery

Physiotherapy techniques are an important part of your recovery. This advice sheet contains some simple ways that you can help yourself following your surgery.

After an operation there are risks that may mean you produce phlegm and be more 'chesty' than normal. This can be due to the anaesthetic, pain from the incision and reduced activity following an operation.

If phlegm remains in the lungs, it provides an ideal environment for bacteria to grow and chest infections to develop. A chest infection can prolong and complicate and increase your hospital stay.

Fortunately, there are a number of simple exercises and measures that **you** can take to help reduce the risk of this. The following advice is to help you to keep your chest clear.

Breathing exercises and coughing

The breathing exercises need to commence as soon as possible as this helps the lungs re-expand following the anaesthetic. Ideally they should commence within the first few hours of waking following your operation.

Deep breathing and coughing may feel uncomfortable but you will **not cause any damage** to stitches or clips. It is very important that you can cough strongly and effectively after your operation. 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

- 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
- 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 following your operation. They may be discontinued when you are able to walk a moderate distance on the ward, for example to the bathroom, so long as you are not coughing up any phlegm.

Position in bed

When you are in bed ensure 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 your operation is to get out of bed and walk as soon as possible. This is the most effective way to prevent a chest infection.

The nurses will help you to sit out in a chair and walk on the ward as soon as your condition allows. This could commence on the **day of surgery** dependent on the procedure you have had. It is normal to have oxygen, drips and drains attached but this should not stop you getting out of bed.

Patient Information

Staff will continue to help you every day until you can do it by yourself. Once you can walk safely on your own you are expected to gradually increase the distance you can walk daily. Aim to sit out at regular intervals and complete regular short walks throughout the day.

Pain relief

Ensure your pain is under control. Some discomfort is normal but you should be able to deep breathe, cough and move around after your operation. If your pain is stopping you from doing this, inform the nursing staff so they can review your pain relief.

Rest

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

If you have any concerns or queries regarding your exercises then please 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 smoke free policy.

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