

PHYSIOTHERAPY FOR PATIENTS HAVING SURGERY

Physiotherapy is an important part of your care following your operation.

The main role of the physiotherapist is to prevent breathing problems after your operation and to help you get moving again.

Breathing exercises

After an operation, you have an increased risk of developing breathing problems.

The reasons for this are:

- some parts of your lungs close so you take smaller breaths
- the lung can produce more phlegm
- you might have trouble coughing phlegm up.

To reduce the risk of breathing problems it is important to do the following things:

Deep breathing exercises

- sit upright in your chair or bed, make sure you are comfortable
- take a slow, deep breath in
- if you can, hold the breath for up to 3 seconds then breathe out steadily
- you should do about 6 of these deep breaths every half an hour when you are awake
- do not do all 6 breaths in one go as you may feel dizzy. Do 3, then some normal breaths, then another 3.

Coughing

- sit upright in your chair or bed, make sure you are comfortable
- support your wound by holding a rolled up towel over it, with both hands if possible
- take a slow, deep breath in, then cough
- if it feels like there is some phlegm to cough up, take some normal breaths then repeat the cough.

Huffing

If coughing is difficult, it may be more comfortable or effective to huff:

- breathe in normally
- open your mouth wide in an 'O' shape and do a short, forced breath out as if you were steaming up your glasses or a mirror
- you can often hear the sound of phlegm as you do this and may need to repeat the process to help move to phlegm upwards to your throat
- if the huff is too short, it may be ineffective; if it is too long it may cause coughing. It just takes a bit of practice.

If you are experiencing any pain and are not able to do your breathing exercises, please tell any of the staff looking after you so we can improve your pain relief.

General exercise and mobility

The physiotherapist will advise you what exercises you can do to prevent joint stiffness and help your circulation after your operation.

The physiotherapist and nursing staff will encourage you to get out of bed and sit in a chair as soon as possible after surgery.

The physiotherapist will help and encourage you to walk soon after your operation. They will advise you to increase the distance and how often to get up and walk about. This will depend on how well you could walk before your operation.

Before you go home, the physiotherapist will advise you on how to build up to your normal level of activity.

The information on this leaflet is to remind you what you were advised by your physiotherapist. Please ask your physiotherapist if you have any further questions.

Contact details

Acute Services Physiotherapy

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Bassetlaw Hospital: 01909 500990 ext 2311

