

PATIENT INFORMATION

Physiotherapy advice before and after abdominal surgery

Who will benefit from this leaflet?

This leaflet has been written by physiotherapists for people having major abdominal surgery (surgery on your tummy). It explains the exercises that can help you prepare for surgery and support your recovery afterwards.

Exercises to complete before your surgery

Breathing exercises

It is important to practice these exercises before your operation, so you are familiar with them after your surgery. They help your lungs recover from the effects of the medication they give you to go to sleep and may reduce your risk of developing chest problems after surgery. **Practice these exercises once a day**

The incentive spirometer

The incentive spirometer is a device that is designed to help you take a slow, **deep breath in**; helping the lower parts of your lungs expand fully. It shows you and your healthcare team how well you are doing and can help reduce the risk of chest infections after surgery.

How to use the incentive spirometer



1. Sit in an upright position in a chair or in bed.
2. Attach the flexible tubing and mouthpiece to the device.
3. Hold the incentive spirometer in an upright position at eye level.
4. Breathe out normally
5. Place the mouthpiece in your mouth and close your lips tightly around it
6. Breathe in slowly and as deeply as possible. Try to keep the yellow ball in the smiley-face area. This helps you breathe in at the right speed. Notice the white piston will rise inside the large column.
7. Breathe in for as long as possible (at least 3-5 seconds) and get the piston as high as you can, always keeping the yellow ball in the smiley face. Then exhale slowly, allowing the piston to fall to the bottom of the column.
8. Rest for a few seconds and complete 5- 10 breaths using the device
9. Position the yellow indicator on the right side of the spirometer to show your best effort.

Please watch the following link to show you how to use the incentive spirometer effectively. [The SPIRO-BALL® incentive spirometer from Intersurgical - YouTube](#)

Exercises to complete after your surgery

Deep breathing exercises

Take a deep breath in through your nose, hold for 2-3 seconds then breathe out gently. Repeat 3-4 times, then return to relaxed breathing. Complete these exercises at least five times throughout the day, unless you have been provided with an incentive spirometer. You should continue these exercises for the first week after your surgery, unless guided otherwise by your physiotherapist.

The incentive spirometer

If you have an incentive spirometer it is important to complete these exercises at least 5 times a day. You should continue these exercises for the first week after your surgery unless guided otherwise by your physiotherapist.

Supported cough

It is important you can cough after your surgery, as the medication used to put you to sleep for the operation can reduce how effectively you clear mucus (phlegm). If pain is making it difficult to cough, speak to your nurse about pain relief.

When you need to cough, bend your knees slightly and use a pillow or towel to press firmly over your wound as you cough. This is known as a supported cough.

Huffing can also help clear mucus (phlegm) if required. Breathe out quickly through an open mouth, as if you are steaming up a mirror.

Getting out of bed

To reduce pressure and pain in your tummy, when trying to get out of bed it is advised to do the following. Bend both knees, roll onto your side, lower your legs off the edge of the bed and push up using your arms. Avoid unnecessary twisting.

Getting into bed

Sit on the side of the bed, lower yourself onto your side and then bring your legs onto the bed.

Sitting in the chair and walking

It is important to get up and move after your surgery. If it is safe to do so, the nursing staff and physiotherapists will support you with this the day after your surgery. They will continue to support you until you are able to complete this by yourself.

For further assistance or to receive this information in a different format, please contact the department which created this leaflet.

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