

Patient information factsheet

Physiotherapy advice following surgery

Respiratory physiotherapy: breathing exercises

Normally you clear about 100ml of sputum (phlegm) a day without being aware of it.

After surgery, because you may have some pain, your mobility (movement) is reduced and we limit how much you eat and drink initially, the sputum can be sticky and difficult to get rid of.

To help keep your lungs clear and reduce the risk of a chest infection, we recommend that you do the following exercises **every hour**:

1. **Take a deep breath** in from the bottom of the lungs. Imagine filling up a balloon up first and then continue until it's full of air.

Hold the deep breath for a count of two seconds and then breathe out.

Repeat three times.

2. **Huff** – a huff is a short sharp breath out. Imagine that you're steaming up a pair of glasses or a pane of glass. This will help to shift the phlegm from the bottom of the lung upwards, so that it can be coughed up.
3. **Cough** – if you have an abdominal wound, place your hands or a folded up towel over the top to support it and minimise any discomfort. Perform a moderate sized cough to get rid of any phlegm.

Try to make sure that you do these exercises every hour for the first one to two days after surgery.

If the medical staff feel that you have a problem clearing your chest, the physiotherapist will see you individually.

Mobility physiotherapy: mobilisation

There is an increased risk of deep vein thrombosis (DVT) after gynaecological surgery, because you're less mobile and the blood can clot more easily.

There are a number of exercises that you can do to reduce this risk.

In bed:

1. Paddle your feet up and down ten times.
2. With the leg out straight push the back of the knee into the bed and tighten the thigh muscle. Repeat this five times on both legs.
3. Squeeze your bottom muscles five times.

In the chair:

1. Repeat bed exercises 1 and 3 above.
2. With the knee bent at 90 degrees, straighten the leg out in front of you and then lower it slowly. Repeat five times.

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You should also avoid crossing your legs.

Early mobilisation is encouraged to work the muscles in the leg and reduce the risk of DVT.

The physiotherapist may see you if your mobility has changed since being in hospital. We will help you to improve your mobility and make sure that you're safe to be discharged home.

Further information

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If you need a translation of this document, an interpreter or a version in large print, Braille or on audio tape, please telephone **023 8079 4688 for help.**