

Physiotherapy Department

A Physiotherapy Guide for Patients having Surgery

Before your operation

- If you are a smoker, you should STOP NOW. This helps reduce breathing problems after your operation. For help giving up smoking contact your GP or health centre or [visit http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/smoking/](http://www.nhs.uk/livewell/smoking/)
- Keep as active as you can in the run up to your operation as this will aid your recovery from the surgery.
- Breathing exercises are important following surgery to prevent problems with your lungs and it is a good idea to start practicing them a few days before surgery.

Breathing Exercises

- Sit in a comfortable upright position with your shoulders relaxed.
- Take a slow deep breath in (through your nose if possible) filling the bottom of your lungs.
- Hold this breath for three seconds then relax and breathe out gently through your mouth.
- Repeat three more times and then rest (more than this may make you feel dizzy or light-headed).

After your operation

- You can start the breathing exercises as soon as you come round from your operation, and they should be practiced every half an hour.
- There may be phlegm in your chest to clear, so it is important to cough. It will be more comfortable if you bend your knees up if lying or lean forwards if sitting and support your wound with your hands, a pillow or folded towel.
- Deep breathing and coughing are very important and prevent chest infections so if you are unable to do so because of pain please tell your nurse.
- The best activity for your lungs is to get back up on your feet as soon as possible.
- You will be helped out of bed the morning after your operation (for some people, on the same day as the surgery) and encouraged to sit in the chair.
- Physiotherapy and nursing staff will also assist you to walk from the first day after your operation until you are able to do so independently. Drips and drains move with you and do not stop you getting out of bed.

Sitting out in the chair and mobilising help prevent complications that can occur following surgery and can therefore minimise the length of time you need to stay in hospital, getting you home quicker.

