Patient Information
GS10

NHS Golden Jubilee

Advice following laparotomy surgery

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Version 3

About this leaflet

The purpose of this leaflet is to give you information about your Laparotomy procedure and provide advice about physiotherapy and discharge information following surgery.

What is a laparotomy?

A Laparotomy is a surgical procedure which is performed through a small incision in the abdomen (stomach area); this is most commonly performed on patients who have had another procedure, e.g. heart surgery and is carried out to investigate unidentified pain but can also be performed as an emergency procedure for other reasons.

After surgery

Following surgery, you may experience some pain or discomfort. This is not unusual, however it is important that you inform the nurses immediately and use your pain relief button regularly; this is essential to allow you to fully recover from your procedure.

Physiotherapy

After surgery, you may have some difficulty breathing deeply or coughing; because of this, it is very important that you complete the breathing exercises given to you by your physiotherapist. This will prevent any phlegm building up in your lungs and will help preventing possible chest infection.

More details will be provided by your physiotherapist, however below are some basic exercises you can follow.

Exercises

1. To begin, try and relax your shoulder and neck muscles and place 1 hand on your stomach.
2. Take a deep breath in through your nose, filling your lungs as much as possible with air, you should feel your stomach rise and fall.
3. Slowly breathe out through your mouth.
4. Repeat this 3 to 5 times as your physiotherapist advises.
5. Give 1 to 3 huffs (a fast blast of air out of your mouth: as if you were steaming up your glasses or a window.)

When you are huffing, if you hear a crackle or feel the need to cough, support you wound with a pillow across your stomach; this should help with the pain. Having your knees bent can also help. When coughing, try and bring up any phlegm you have as this will help prevent infection.

Please note, that if you begin to feel light headed at any point during the exercise, return to breathing as normal.

When in your bed, your physiotherapist will give you other exercises for your legs; this is important to maintain good circulation.

Recovery

The best recovery for your lungs following surgery is get back to moving around. Your physiotherapist will aim to get you up and into the chair the day after your procedure. As soon as it is safe, your physiotherapist will develop a walking plan to get you back on your feet and active as quickly as possible. This will be discussed with your after your operation. Walking is an important stage for your recovery and has several benefits:

- lung recovery – preventing chest infections and improving your deep breathing;
- muscles – improving your strength and your fitness levels; and
- is an important method of rebuilding your confidence and allowing you to get back to normal.

Your physiotherapist will also give you some bed exercises, which you can begin a few days after surgery. These will include abdominal exercises, pelvic tilting and knee rolling.

At home

When you return home following surgery, it is important that you continue with your walking.

In your first week, you should aim for a 5 to 10 minute walk each day; try and increase this every week by 5 to 10 minutes. Different individuals will progress at different speeds; as such if you find this is too much, or too little, personalise your routine to a level you are comfortable with.

At 4 to 6 weeks, you can begin to do light tasks such as light ironing and washing dishes. It is essential that you avoid any heavy lifting for 8 to 12 weeks after your operation to allow your wound to heal. Failure to do so could lead to further complications.

Contact

If you have any questions regarding these activities, please ask your physiotherapist or contact rehabilitation department on 0141 951 5121

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