

PATIENT INFORMATION

Post-Abdominal Surgery Physiotherapy Management

**A Guide to Prevention of Chest
Complications and Post-Op
Management**



This booklet has been developed for any patient undergoing abdominal surgery and will provide you with simple exercises/advice to complete throughout your recovery and should begin as soon as possible after your surgery. Your length of stay in hospital will depend on your type of surgery and post-op recovery pathway which can vary.

Either pre or post-operatively, you should see a Physiotherapist (PT) who will offer advice and support to aid recovery of your abdominal surgery. Depending on your needs, you may see an Occupational Therapist (OT) during your stay for transfer and mobility practice to further enhance your recovery. A Therapist will gain your consent prior to completing any treatment with you.

You are more at risk of post-operative complications if you have any pre-existing conditions such as chronic lung changes or long-term reduced mobility.

WHY DO WE NEED TO COMPLETE BREATHING EXERCISES?

General anaesthetic can reduce the normal mechanics involved in breathing and can relax all the muscles involved. The surgery will produce pain around the abdominal area due to the incision and this may make you reluctant to take a deep breath, cough or move; the combination of these three factors can increase the risk of acquiring a chest infection as phlegm can build up within the airways.

Deep breathing, coughing and moving are all vitally important to maintain your ability to expel phlegm from your

lungs, consequently reducing the risk of acquiring any respiratory complications.

PREPARATIONS FOR RESPIRATORY PHYSIOTHERAPY

1. Pain

It is important that your pain is under control, to allow you to complete all exercises and movements with as little pain as possible. You may have a patient controlled analgesia (PCA) that you can press or medication which nursing staff can provide. *If at any point this is not managed you need to discuss this with either the Doctor or a Nurse on the ward.*

Note: You may have no pain at rest but it is still important to ensure minimal pain whilst moving. You can organize pre-emptive pain relief to take prior to Physiotherapy sessions to aid in your progression.

2. Environmental Preparation

Ensure you are sat up in a comfortable position to enable you to get the most benefit from your breathing exercises. Make sure you have a pillow or rolled towel close by to support your abdomen. This will aid in reducing the risk of further pain when coughing.

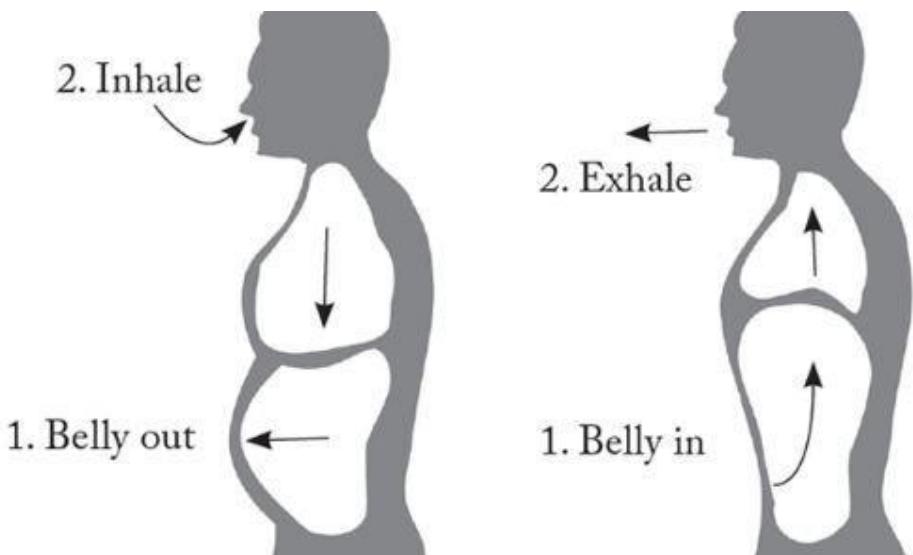
3. Breathing Exercises (Active Cycle of Breathing or Deep Breathing Exercises)

a. Deep Breathing

Either Sitting up in bed, or preferably sat in a chair.
Relax your shoulders

Slowly, take a deep breath in through your nose.
Hold for 1-2 seconds
Slowly, breathe out through your mouth.

Complete this 3-4 times. Try not to take excessive amounts of deep breaths in a row as this may cause you to become lightheaded. If this happens, return to your normal breathing pattern.



b. Huff

This is a forceful breath out, with your mouth open wide as if “fogging up a mirror”. Huffing is less irritating than persistent coughing and a simple way to help bring up phlegm to the high part of your lungs to cough up.



Complete this 1-3 times

c. Supported cough

Coughing is the normal way of removing phlegm from your lungs. After surgery there can be an increase of phlegm which needs to be cleared.

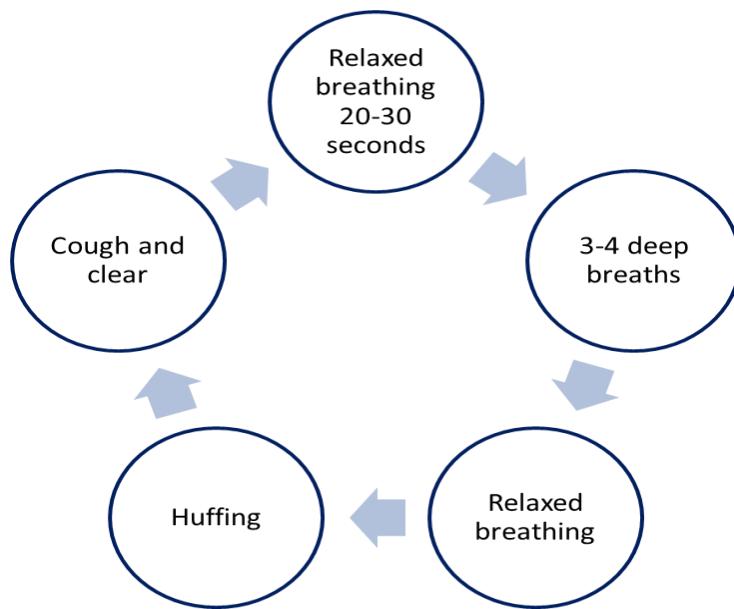
It is recommended to apply firm pressure either with a pillow or a folded towel onto the wound site whilst coughing, to support the stomach and reduce pain/discomfort.

Complete 3-4 repetitions of this cycle and repeat 3-4 times a day. Each cycle will take approximately 1-2 minutes.

Note: None of these exercises will damage your staples or stitches. Completing these exercises will reduce the risk of developing a chest complication such as a chest infection.

If you feel increasingly short of breath, more “chesty” with phlegm or generally unwell despite completing your breathing exercises, please inform the Doctors of Nursing staff looking after you. Likewise, once you have returned home, if you experience these symptoms, please contact your GP for further advice.

ACTIVE CYCLE OF BREATHING



4. Sitting Out and Mobilising

The best exercise to help your lungs recover from surgery is to mobilise as soon as possible. We aim for all patients to sit out in a chair, if able, on the **first day** after their operation. You may feel slightly stiff, weak or fatigued. This is normal but physical activity will help to reduce these symptoms.

Either the Nursing Staff or Therapists will help you with this until you are able to do this yourself safely and independently. Any attachments you may have will not stop you from getting out of bed, as they can be removed, carried or pushed alongside you.

From this point, you will work with the Therapy team, Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Therapy Assistants who will help you to develop your treatment goals. These goals will work towards improving your physical ability and aim to assist you in returning to your

prior level of function. In addition, your Therapist may give you a customized exercise programme either in sitting or standing to complete independently.

If you require any additional walking aids to transfer equipment, these will be provided prior to you leaving hospital unless they are not essential equipment for immediate discharge.

You may also be referred onward to community therapy services to aid with further recovery if this is deemed necessary. Your GP will have received a discharge letter informing them of your treatment within the hospital.

If a package of care is required for a short or long period of time on discharge, you will be referred on to the Social Work Team as part of your treatment to progress you to your previous level of function.

If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to discuss these with the staff on your ward.

Please liaise with your Consultant on the ward in regard to recommencing any other activities such as driving and work, particularly if heavy lifting is involved.

During your time spent with us, it is important that you are happy with your care and treatment. Please speak to a member of staff and/or the ward/department Sister/Charge Nurse if you have questions or concerns.

MATRON

A Matron is also available during the hours of 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. During these periods, ward/department staff can contact Matron to arrange to meet with you. Out of hours, a Senior Nurse can be contacted via the ward/department to deal with any concerns you may have.

INFECTION CONTROL REQUEST

Preventing infections is a crucial part of our patients' care. To ensure that our standards remain high our staff have regular infection prevention and control training and their practice is monitored in the workplace. We ask patients and visitors to assist us in preventing infections by cleaning their hands at regular intervals and informing staff of areas within the hospital that appear soiled.

As a patient there may be times that you are unsure whether a staff member has cleaned their hands; if in doubt please ask the staff member and they will be only too happy to put your mind at ease by cleaning their hands so that you can see them.

SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS

Please inform the ward if you require an interpreter to go through this leaflet with you or to explain any of your treatment during your hospital stay.

ANY CONDITION SPECIFIC DANGER SIGNALS TO LOOK OUT FOR:

CONTACT INFORMATION IF YOU ARE WORRIED ABOUT YOUR CONDITION

- Your own GP
- Ward staff while under the care of the hospital

OTHER USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS/CONTACTS:

NHS 111

Stop Smoking Helpline (Sefton) – 0300 100 1000

Stop Smoking Helpline (West Lancashire) – 0800 328 6297

**Please call 01704 704714 if you need
this leaflet in an alternative format**

Southport and Ormskirk Hospital NHS Trust

Ormskirk & District General Hospital
Wigan Road, Ormskirk, L39 2AZ
Tel: (01695) 577111

Southport & Formby District General Hospital
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FOR APPOINTMENTS

Telephone (01695) 656680
Email soh-tr.appointments@nhs.net

Please remember to complete the **attached Friends and Family Test**.

Alternatively, you can complete the *Friends and Family Test* on-line by going to: southportandormskirk.nhs.uk/FFT
Thank you

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