



Information for patients having surgery



‘Eat, Drink, Dress, Move’ is a national programme we want to tell you about as it could help to improve your surgery experience .

Eating, drinking, and moving can be different for each person. It’s important to think about your usual fitness level, what you eat, and how much you drink. These three things can have a positive impact on:

- Your wound healing and general recovery
- Your hospital length of stay
- Your return to normal activities
- Your risk of post-operative complications

Dressing is important because it helps you feel more like yourself. However, in the short term, you may feel more comfortable in pyjamas or theatre gown. These garments are designed to make it easier for us to monitor your condition and administer treatments while ensuring you stay as comfortable as possible.

Our team of specialists has put together more details for you in this leaflet and provided a summary at the end.

Expectations

How long you need to stay in the hospital depends on the type of surgery you have. You’ll work with a team of surgeons, anaesthesiologists, doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals during your initial recovery.

For bone and joint surgeries, you might not need to stay in the hospital overnight and could be ready to go home the same day or the next day.

Some operations need more recovery time, so you might not be able to go home the same day. This is often true for general surgery patients.

For all operations, you will be reviewed by our skilled healthcare team. Once they decide you are ready and can safely continue your recovery at home, you will be discharged.

We will only let you go home when you are fully recovered, and it is safe for you to do so.

Nutrition and Hydration Matters

What are the benefits of eating and drinking well in hospital?

- Supports wound healing
- Helps to fight any infection
- Improves your mood
- Gives you energy and strength to mobilise
- Can help you to get back to your usual activities more quickly!

How can you eat well in hospital?

After your operation the aim will be for you to eat and drink again as soon as possible. You may start with liquids, followed by a soft diet, and then build up depending on the type of operation you have had.

It is important that you:

- Try to eat something at each mealtime
- If you don't feel like something from the menu, ask for an alternative
- Try to sit up in a chair for mealtimes when you can
- If you have any specific dietary requirements, let the ward staff know so that we can support you

If you have a poor appetite or have lost weight, sometimes eating little and often is helpful. We have snacks available on the ward.

You may receive some nutritional drinks after your surgery to support your recovery - these provide additional energy, protein, vitamins and minerals.

What about drinking?

Keeping hydrated is also important to help you recover and stay well.

What you can drink before and after surgery depends on the operation you are having. As previously mentioned, after your surgery you might start with sips of water, and progress gradually to a normal diet. Or you may be able to eat and drink as normal straight away. Please ask staff if you are unsure.

Once you are able to drink, aim for 6–8 cups of fluid per day, unless you have been advised otherwise.

The ward will have water, tea, coffee and milky drinks available.

You may also be given some nutritional supplement drinks to take.

If you start to feel nauseous, talk with a healthcare professional looking after you. Occasionally, there may be a need for some anti-sickness medication.

Dress

You are encouraged to change out of your hospital gown and/or hospital wear into your own, comfortable clothing, when you feel able to do so.

Your nurse or therapist will be able to advise if you have any queries.

Movement matters

What are the benefits of staying active in hospital?

- Promotes tissue and bone healing
- Improves breathing which reduces the risk of chest infections
- Better appetite and digestion
- Less weakness and fatigue
- Helps with longer-term pain management

- Maintains fitness levels and range of movement
- Better sleep and mood regulation overall
- Improves bladder and bowel function
- Promotes good skin health
- Enables you to return to your usual activities sooner

What are the ways of staying active in hospital?

- Take regular pain relief as prescribed if you are unable to take a deep breath or make small movements
- There are exercises you can perform in bed to continue to aid your recovery (please refer to the basic set on page 9 onwards)
- Get out of bed for the first time on the day of your procedure. You may require some assistance; your nurse or therapist will be able to support you
- When possible, walk to the bathroom for a shower or a wash
- Walk with your relatives when you're strong enough
- Look out for signs on the corridor to quantify how far you are walking

Move: Mobility

You will likely be up and moving on the same day as your operation. This has been proven to benefit and aid your recovery after surgery, and as you are able, we would encourage you to increase the amount of movement you do over time, until you return to your usual daily life.

Staying in bed all day can lead to between 3–4% reduction in muscle strength per day, during the first week. Depending on multiple factors such as current fitness and age, this can take considerable time and effort to regain.

Staying as **active** as possible whilst you recover from your surgery is very important. Every bit of physical activity can help keep you healthy and reduce your recovery time. If safe and able, maintaining your normal routine of getting up, dressed and moving throughout the day will get you out of hospital sooner.

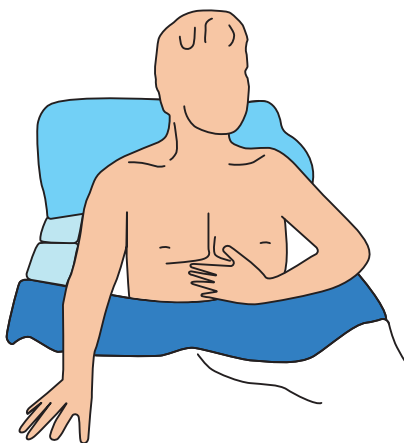
Breathing exercises after surgery

Many people are tired after surgery and taking big breaths can be a challenge. Shallow breathing can increase the risk of developing a chest infection postoperatively. You can help prevent this by completing deep breathing exercises.

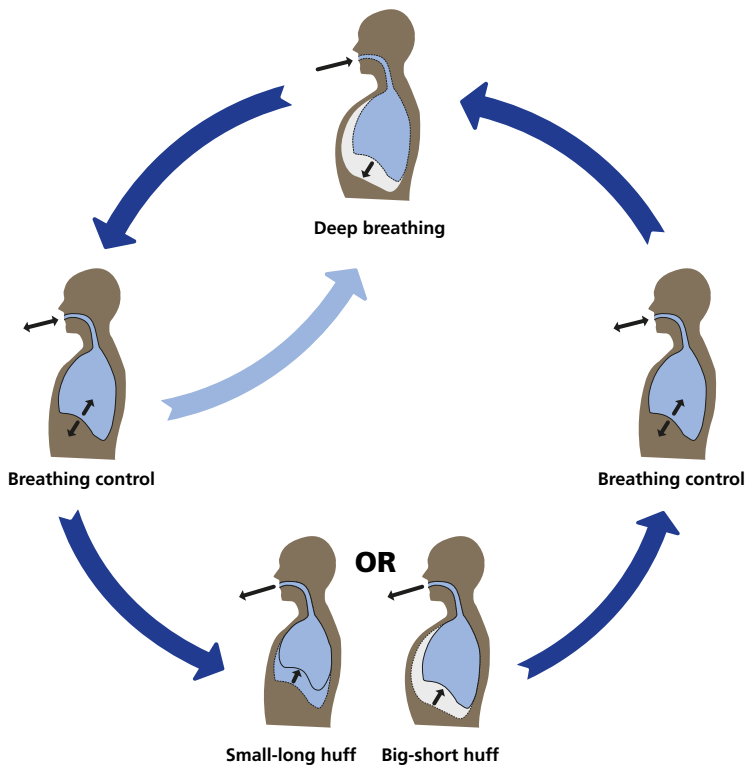
If you have had abdominal surgery, your team may recommend that you use a device called an **incentive spirometer**. If you do not have this device, you can still practice deep breathing on your own. For those of you who have had abdominal surgery, it is important to take regular pain relief so that you can do these exercises effectively.

The following steps can be taken:

- Sit upright. It may help to sit at the edge of the bed with your feet hanging over the side. If you cannot sit like this, raise the head of your bed as high as you can
- If your surgical cut (incision) is on your chest or stomach, you may need to hold a pillow tightly over your incision. This helps with some of the discomfort
- Take a few normal breaths, then take a slow, deep breath in
- Hold your breath for about three to five seconds
- Gently and slowly breathe out through your mouth. Make an “O” shape with your lips as you blow out, like blowing out birthday candles or blowing a kiss
- Repeat 5–10 times, or as many times as your healthcare profession has told you to



Do these deep-breathing exercises at regular intervals throughout the day or as directed.



For more information on breathing exercises and their benefits please visit: www.acprc.org.uk/Data/Publication_Downloads/GL-05ACBT.pdf

Exercises

Ankle pumps

This exercise is important to help with your circulation and to prevent the formation of blood clots.

Frequency	Hourly after surgery
Repetitions	20



- 1. Sit on the bed with your legs straight, or lie on the bed on your back with your legs straight.



- 2. Bend and straighten your ankles briskly.

Static Gluteal Squeezes

This exercise is important to help with your circulation and to prevent the formation of blood clots.

Frequency	Hourly after surgery
Repetitions	10



1. Lie with your back on the bed and your legs straight.



2. Squeeze your buttocks together. Hold for five seconds. Then relax for five seconds.

Static Quads

Frequency	Three times a day
Repetitions	10



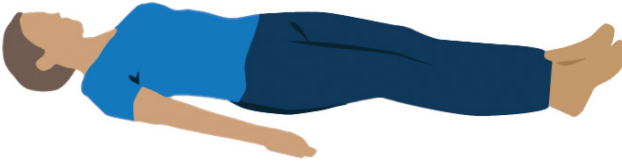
1. Lie with your back on the bed and your legs straight. Bend your toes up towards you.



2. Push the backs of your knees down firmly into the bed. Hold for five seconds. Then relax for five seconds.

Hip / knee flexion in lying

Frequency	At least three times a day
Repetitions	10



1. Lie on your back.



2. Bend your leg, keeping your heel on the bed.

3. Slowly straighten your knee. Try to keep your hip and knee aligned throughout.

Eat, Drink, Dress, Move matters

Summary

- We want you to feel able to make choices that will help you with your recovery
- If you feel up to it, please ask for a drink or something to eat after your surgery
- If it hurts to take a deep breath, please let us know. Pain can make it hard to move
- Doing the exercises in this booklet regularly will help you recover from your operation
- You will continue to heal and recover when you are safely discharged from hospital. It is normal to take some time at home to return to your normal activity level
- If you have any questions or worries about your recovery, please speak to any healthcare professional

Further information

There is lots of information available on the internet about recovering after an operation. Here are some examples:

Birmingham Community Leisure Trust: Be Active & Passport to Leisure Schemes | Birmingham Community Leisure Trust

(<https://bit.ly/4cy0JAA>)

Active Together:

Let's Get Moving | Active Together

(<https://bit.ly/3ApSmd6>)

NHS website exercises:

Exercise - NHS (<https://bit.ly/4dQYBFe>)

NHS website information 'After surgery':

Having an operation (surgery) - After surgery - NHS

(<https://bit.ly/4dufSUS>)

Royal College of Anaesthetists Patient Information: What can I expect during my recovery?: What can I expect during my recovery? | The Royal College of Anaesthetists
(<https://bit.ly/4dQXUf6>)

References

Information in this leaflet has come from:

www.nhs.uk

www.gov.uk

Microsoft Word – Preoperative assessment and optimisation guidance_format.docx (<https://bit.ly/4dmlkJv>)

Delivery of drinking, eating and mobilising (DrEaMing) and its association with length of hospital stay after major noncardiac surgery: observational cohort study - PMC
(<https://bit.ly/3WM4BYS>)

Enhanced recovery – NHS
(<https://bit.ly/3LZtVG6>)

PQIP-Report2023_Final version_140623.pdf
(<https://bit.ly/4cnH8D9>)

Enhanced_perioperative_care_guidance_v1.0.pdf
(<https://bit.ly/4dhRLsL>)

Recommendations | Perioperative care in adults | Guidance | NICE
(<https://bit.ly/3ypxr9G>)

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Co-produced with patients and Lived Experience Partners.

Find out more about University Hospitals Birmingham NHS Foundation Trust and the services we provide at: **www.uhb.nhs.uk**

Please use the space below to write down any questions you may have and bring this with you to your next appointment.

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Contact details:

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If you require this information in another format, such as a different language, large print, braille or audio version please ask a member of staff or email **interpreting.service@uhb.nhs.uk**.

Surgery Department

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