

Physiotherapy Guidelines

BASICS

- You should pace yourself and return to activities gradually.
- Take note of how you are feeling and adjust your activity levels accordingly.
- If you start feeling unwell stop what you are doing, have a rest, and try again when you are feeling better.
- Most people will feel much better 6 weeks after surgery but you can expect full recovery to take up to 12 weeks.
- Do not get discouraged, even if you are finding it difficult to keep up with the program, especially in the first 2 to 3 weeks at home. This is quite common and will usually pass as you continue to feel with time.

DAILY WALKING PROGRAM

For most people, walking is the most beneficial form of cardiovascular exercise to assist recovery after surgery.

Why?

- It conditions your heart and lungs
- It helps to control blood pressure and cholesterol levels
- It helps to burn energy and aids in weight loss
- It improves muscle tone and endurance
- It makes you feel good and improves quality of life

You are encouraged to walk **twice daily minimum** in the beginning as prescribed by your physiotherapist.

Remember:

- Walk at a comfortable pace. You should be able to keep up a conversation whilst you walk. If you cannot then slow down a little.
- Walk in comfortable conditions: avoid extreme heat or cold.
- Avoid hills and uneven ground for a few weeks
- Do not take the dog with you in the first few weeks.
- Do not walk if you are feeling unwell.
- Do not walk immediately after meals: wait approximately 45 minutes before exercising.
- If possible walk with someone until comfortable to go alone.
- If walking alone ensure you take a mobile phone with you in case of an emergency.

If you feel unwell at any point - Stop and Rest

If symptoms persist for more than 10 minutes or return you should consult your GP.

After 6 weeks you should aim to maintain your fitness levels by continuing a minimum of 30 minutes of cardiovascular exercise at least 5 times per week.

GOOD POSTURE AFTER YOUR OPERATION

This is very important, especially in the first 6 weeks to minimize muscle stiffness and chest discomfort. There may be a tendency to lean forward and round your shoulders initially, particularly if your incision is painful.

Remember to be aware of your posture at all times, whether you are lying down, sitting or walking.

Try to keep your head upright, shoulders back and back straight. Use cues such as looking in the mirror to check your posture.

In the first 6 weeks it is also important to continue with supporting your chest when coughing and/or sneezing



STRETCHES

It is common to feel some discomfort and stiffness, particularly in your shoulders and chest after surgery. The stretches that follow are designed to stretch and maintain the muscles of your shoulders and chest wall. All stretches should be done slowly and you should feel a gentle stretch without pain with each one. If you have any pain, or your breastbone clicks more than normal when doing the stretches you should stop.

Sit on an upright chair without arms e.g. a dining chair, so your back is supported but your arms are free to move sideways.

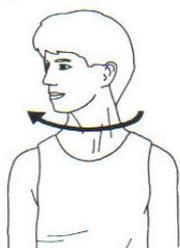
REPEAT EACH OF THE FOLLOWING EXERCISES 5 TIMES, TWICE A DAY MINIMUM DURING THE FIRST 6 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY



Sitting up tall
Move your head backwards as far as is comfortable.



Sitting up tall
Turn your head to one side until you feel a stretch.
Repeat to the other side.



Sitting up tall
Bring one ear towards one shoulder until you feel the stretch on the other side.
Repeat to the other side.

For the following always use both arms at the same time.

Please let your Physiotherapist know if you have any pre-existing neck or shoulder injuries whilst you are in hospital.



Sitting up tall.

Lift your arms up keeping your elbows in. Breathe in on the way up and out on the way down.



Sitting up tall.

Lift your arms up sideways with your thumbs leading the way. Breathe in on the way up and out on the way down.



Sit with your back straight and feet firmly on the floor. Gently pull your shoulder blades together while turning your thumbs and hands outwards.