

# Physiotherapy for Abdominal Surgery

Following abdominal surgery, you will be encouraged to sit up, move around and do exercises that can help prevent complications.

It is vital that you are comfortable enough to breathe deeply, move, and cough strongly. If you can't, you need to ask for pain relief or use your pain relief button if you have one.

Walking has many benefits including promoting bowel movement, improving blood circulation and decreasing the risk of blood clots, maintaining strength and independence. You will start walking on the first day after your operation. The nursing/physiotherapy staff will assist you with your first couple of walks. You will start with regular short walks, increasing the distance each day. Try to maintain an upright posture whilst you walk.

## Getting out of bed

To put less strain on your abdomen and make it more comfortable for you to get out of bed:

- Bend up your knees, support your abdomen with one hand
- Roll onto one side
- Push up into sitting using your arms, while letting your legs go over the side of the bed
- Move your bottom to the edge of the bed by pushing down through your arms. Sit on the edge of your bed with your feet on the floor until any dizziness stops.

It is better for your breathing if you sit out of bed at least a couple of times over the day. Your nursing staff will be able to find you a suitable chair.

## Breathing exercises

Do the following breathing exercises while sitting as upright as possible. In a chair is best.

1. Relax your shoulders and upper chest
2. Take a deep breath to fill the bottom of your lungs
3. Hold the breath for three seconds
4. Breathe out slowly
5. Do 10 deep breaths in a row, then take a rest
6. Repeat this three times per hour.

## Cough

- Your deep breathing exercises should be followed by a strong and effective cough
- To ease the discomfort of a cough - support your abdomen with a folded towel, a pillow, or your hands.

## Circulation exercises

To help prevent blood clots from forming in your legs you can do some simple circulation exercises.

- Move your ankles up and down strongly 10 times
- Tighten your thigh muscles and buttocks, hold for five seconds then relax. Repeat 10 times.

## On return home

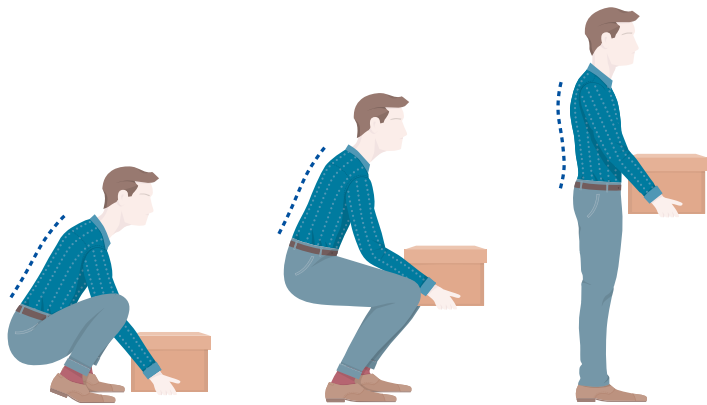
### Lifting

As a guide, do not lift anything over 5kg in weight for 6-8 weeks after your operation. If you have a

stoma, heavy lifting should be avoided due to the risk of hernia/stomal prolapse.

Correct lifting and bending will allow healing of your abdominal muscles and will prevent back injury – make it a lifelong habit.

- Stand close to the object with your feet comfortably apart
- Bend your knees and keep your back straight
- Draw in your pelvic floor muscles and brace with your abdominals while lifting, holding the object close to you
- Push through your legs to lift and take steps rather than twisting with a load.



these muscles by:

- Lay on your back with your knees bent up
- Place one hand on your lower abdomen and gently pull your belly button in and away from your hand, towards your spine. Keep breathing and keep your upper abdomen relaxed. Hold for 5 seconds, and then relax. Repeat 5 times.
- As your muscles get stronger, try to hold for longer (up to 10 seconds) and increase the number of repetitions (up to 10)
- You can try this exercise in other positions (i.e.: sitting) and during tasks that involve lifting to help protect your back.

### General exercise

Begin a gradual walking program when you get home. Try to gradually build up the distance and speed of your walks. Make sure to stay well hydrated (particularly if you have a stoma bag). Please consult your medical team before increasing your activity levels e.g. swimming, cycling, running or low/high impact sports.

### Abdominal exercises

The deep abdominal muscles usually work like a corset to help support your lower back and draw your stomach in. Some abdominal muscles have been cut during your surgery so their support function has been impaired. You can exercise



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