

## Role of physiotherapy following surgery

Following surgery there are possible post-operative complications which can lead to conditions such as pneumonia, collapsed lung, DVTs, and pressure ulcers (bed sores). In order to reduce the risk of these complications we ask that you complete the following exercises.

### Mobilise

- Early mobilisation is a key factor in reducing post-operative complications, enabling a quick recovery and timely discharge from hospital.
- Mobilisation is just as important for your lungs following surgery as it is for your muscles.
- Research has provided strong evidence that for every day you do not mobilise away from your bed you are 3 times more likely to develop post-operative complications.
- You will be expected to get out of bed and mobilise on the ward on the day of your operation or the following day.
- You may be assisted to get out of bed by your nurse (if needed). If you have issues with your mobility you will be seen by a physiotherapist. They will assess and progress your mobility and will make recommendations regarding discharge plans.

### Circulation

It is important to maintain blood circulation following surgery to reduce the risk of deep vein thrombosis due to immobility. TED stockings or Flotron ankle pumps will be provided by nursing staff post-operatively. Repeat the exercises 1-2 hourly; they can be done when in bed or the chair. The exercises are as follows:

#### 1. Ankle pumps



#### 2. Ankle rotations



## Breathing exercises

When you are in bed/the chair do some simple breathing exercises regularly to help prevent any lung complications. Remain in an upright sitting position. The breathing techniques are as follows:

- Deep breathing: Take a long deep breath in to maximum expansion and then hold for a count of three. The upper chest and shoulders should remain relaxed. Breathing out should be gentle and relaxed.
- The forced expiration technique – huffing with breathing control: To huff, take a medium to small breath in, not a deep one, and then force or squeeze (remove) the air out by tightening your abdominal (tummy) muscles but keeping your mouth open like you are trying to steam up a mirror. It is important to keep your head and shoulders relaxed. Perform 2-3 huffs at a time and repeat hourly.
- Supported cough: When coughing following your surgery it may be difficult due to pain. A supported cough uses a pillow squeezed around your abdomen whilst you cough (see image below). It is a good exercise for your lungs following surgery to have a cough and clear any secretions you may bring up.



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This document can be made available in other languages and formats upon request.

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