

Physiotherapy

Gynaecology surgery

This leaflet contains all of the advice and exercise information you require to aid a quick recovery following your gynaecology surgery. It is a general guide and you should find it helpful whatever gynaecological surgery you have had.

Your rate of recovery will depend on the type of operation and how it was performed. Operations are either performed through your abdomen, through your vagina or keyhole surgery.

Your women's health physiotherapist will tailor your recovery to your individual circumstances and answer any questions you have.



First day after your surgery

Breathing exercises

When you wake up from your operation it is important to take three deep breaths every half an hour while you are awake. Try to keep your shoulders relaxed and not sit slumped as this will help you to take a deeper breath.

Don't be scared to cough as it is important to clear any phlegm. It may help to support the site of your operation when you cough by using a rolled up towel or pillow over your abdomen. If the operation was performed vaginally you may want to apply pressure over your sanitary towel.

Circulation exercises

Exercise is important to keep your circulation flowing as you will not be moving around as much as normal.

- Make circles with your ankles
- Wiggle your toes
- Squeeze your buttocks and hold for five seconds
- Straighten your knees and hold for five seconds.

Practice these exercises for a minute every 30 minutes until you go home.

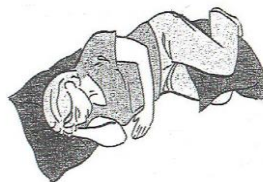
Getting moving

It is important to sit out of bed as soon as you feel able, your physiotherapist or nurse will help you with this if

required. Do not attempt to walk on your own if you are experiencing any dizziness.

Rolling in bed

When lying on your back, bend both knees up, keeping your feet on the bed. Pull in your tummy muscles towards your spine. Roll on to your side. Placing a pillow under the lower part of your abdomen and between your knees will help you to rest comfortably, especially if you have backache.



To get out of bed

Roll onto your side, bend both knees, lower your feet off the side of the bed as well as pushing your body up by pressing down into the mattress with your arms and hands. Sit on the side of the bed for a minute, and then stand by bringing your body weight forward and use your leg muscles to stand tall.



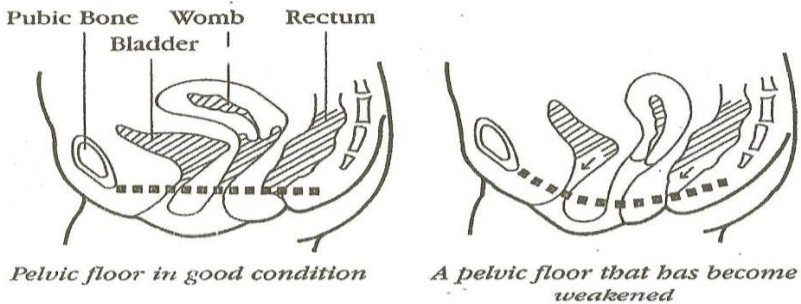
To get back into bed

Stand with the back of your knees against the bed, support your abdomen with one hand and put the other on the bed behind you. Bend forwards as you sit. Lower your head and shoulders sideways down on to the pillow, lifting your legs up at the same time. Keeping knees bent, roll onto your back.



Pelvic floor muscle exercises

Your pelvic floor muscles help to keep your organs in the correct place avoiding prolapse. They also prevent incontinence and have a role in sexual function. It is important to get these muscles working after your operation to prevent future complications.



Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself passing wind and trying to stop yourself from passing urine. Squeeze and lift these pelvic floor muscles, closing and drawing up the back then front passage.

Long contraction

Gradually increase the hold time and the number of repetitions until you can hold the squeeze for 10 seconds and repeat 10 times.

Short contraction

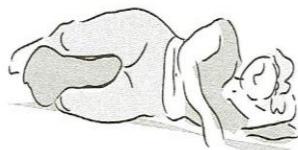
In addition, tighten them as quickly as you can, then relax immediately and repeat for up to 10 times.

Abdominal exercises

After your operation it is also important to build or maintain strength in your tummy muscles. This will aid the pelvic floor to support your back and improve posture.

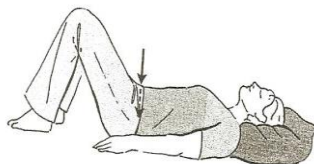
The deep tummy exercise

Exercise in a comfortable position – perhaps lying on your side or on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the bed. Breathe in gently. As you breathe out, gently draw in the lower part of your tummy. You should be able to breathe and talk while you exercise. Aim to build up gradually – holding the muscles in for 10 seconds and repeating up to 10 times.



Pelvic tilting

Lie with your head on the pillow, knees bent and shoulder width apart. Hollow your abdomen and flatten your back into the bed as your pelvis tilts. Breathe normally. Hold the position for 3-4 seconds and release gently. Repeat this up to 10 times, 3 times per day.



Knee rolling

Maintaining the same position draw in lower tummy muscles, back remains flat on the bed, let your knees roll from side to side. Repeat a few times each side.

Recovering from your operation

Recovery from your operation varies from person to person. Your age, previous surgery, being overweight and having a weak pelvic floor muscle will all be important factors. If you are in this group more care should be taken with your recovery. Listen to your body and get adequate rest when you are feeling tired. Accept offers of help.

Continue with the exercises set by your physiotherapist at home. Gradually progress them until you are at the maximum number of seconds and repetitions as advised within this leaflet.

Light general exercise is considered acceptable around 3-6 weeks after your operation. This would include low impact activities and stretches. Swimming is suitable after 6 weeks when healing has occurred and any bleeding has stopped. Three months is an adequate time scale for sports that are considered to be high impact. However some heavy exercise can cause an excessive strain on the pelvic floor and these should be avoided for life.

Walking is a great exercise, but be careful not to overdo this. Start gradually, up to 10 minutes, once or twice a day and aim towards getting back to your normal walking routine over the next few weeks.

Try to drink 1.5 to 2 litres of water per day to help avoid constipation and urinary tract infections

If your home, return to work when you and your body feels ready. As a general guide a non-physically

demanding job such as a desk job you may return within 3-6 weeks. However, if your job is very physical and involves heavy lifting and standing for long periods you may need longer. You may need your employer to do a work place assessment. Speak to your women's health physiotherapist or doctor about your own individual circumstances.

Whilst recovering AVOID

- activities that involve prolonged standing e.g. ironing, preparing the dinner,
- heavy housework such as carrying the washing, vacuuming,
- heavy lifting (2.5kgs or 5lbs limit),
- strenuous exercise,
- do not strain to empty your bowels,
- driving for approx 3-4 weeks or 6 weeks if you have had a repair, check with insurance companies,
- you may want to wait 3-4 weeks before sexual intercourse, make sure any bleeding has stopped, be guided by how you feel.

Long term precautions

- activities that involve heavy lifting if you have a weak pelvic floor e.g. patients that have had prolapse repair or incontinence problems,
- avoid constipation using diet and fluids.

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