

# Physiotherapy following **abdominal surgery**

Information for patients, parents, guardians and carers



## What to expect

It's normal to feel tired following surgery and the anaesthetic. It's also normal to have a sore throat. This should get better quickly.



You might feel dizzy. You will have been laid down for a long time, so take it slowly when you first sit or stand up. Make sure someone is with you when you first stand.

You may have some pain or swelling in your tummy. This can make it hard to take a deep breath and make it uncomfortable to cough, but breathing deeply and coughing can help keep your lungs clear.

## Things to do in hospital



Have regular drinks – this will make you feel better.

Let your nurse know if your pain feels worse – they will check on you regularly after your operation but between these times they won't know how you are feeling.

Don't pull up on anyone or let them pull you to sit up or get up from bed – you need to be careful of your tummy muscles. Parents or staff can help you up by supporting you from behind your back.

Keep circling your ankles and bending and straightening your knees. Doing this helps to improve the blood flow in your legs when you're not moving around as much.

Get up and start walking early. After the physiotherapists have seen you, it is important to keep taking regular walks as long as it's not too painful. Make sure you stand up tall.

Try to keep things normal by using the toilet and getting washed in the bathroom – you can have a shower from the second day after your operation but try not to completely soak your wound or dressing. Make sure you pat the wound or dressing dry – don't rub it.

Complete the breathing exercise every hour and have a good cough using a pillow or rolled up towel to support your tummy.

Start to get dressed each day. Try to wear loose fitting clothes that can be easily pulled on and off and that won't rub your wound.

## Things to do at home

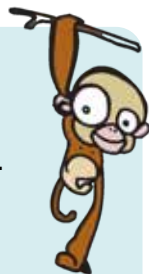
Complete the breathing exercise 3 times a day followed by a strong cough. Do this for 2 weeks after you have left hospital.

Lots of walking, making sure you stand up tall.

If possible get a hall pass for your return to school. This is to stop people accidentally bumping into your tummy while it's healing. You will need a pass for around 4 weeks after you have left hospital.

When your scar is fully healed with no scabs left, it's a good idea to gently massage the scar to help the skin tissues to knit together neatly. To do this you can gently move your thumb in circles over the scar, using any oil or unscented moisturising cream to stop it rubbing. Do this once a day.

You may feel tired when you get home, so only do as much as your body feels like doing. You may need short naps during the day, but make sure this doesn't stop you from sleeping at night.



## Things to avoid

Don't lift anything heavy for 6 weeks (nothing heavier than a bag of sugar). This is 4 weeks for laparoscopic surgery.

Do not do any hard or tiring activity for between 6 and 8 weeks; this includes running, swimming, cycling, dancing, and so on. You must not go swimming until the wound has fully healed and there are no scabs left.

Don't do any contact (or sports that have a risk of contact) or heavy lifting sports for 3 months until you are fully healed; this includes rugby, football, netball, martial arts and so on.



## Please contact Ward 25 or your GP if:

- You/your child develops a fever.
- You/your child's tummy swells.
- The wound becomes red, swollen or hot.
- The wound is oozing.
- You/your child is not recovering as expected.



## Any further questions?

We're happy to answer any questions you may have when you get home related to you/your child's recovery.

Please contact **Ward 25** on **01623 622515**, extension **6181** or **3063**, and ask for the ward physiotherapist or occupational therapist.



### Further sources of information

NHS Choices: [www.nhs.uk/conditions](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions)

Our website: [www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk](http://www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk)

**King's Mill Hospital:** 01623 672222

**Newark Hospital:** 01636 685692

**Email:** [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net)

### Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email [sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net).

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you. External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them. If you require a full list of references (if relevant) for this leaflet, please email [sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net](mailto:sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net) or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.



To be completed by the Communications office  
Leaflet code: PIL20209-05-PFAS  
Created: February 2018 / Revised: September 2025 / Review Date: September 2027