

Exercise advice for people after liver and pancreas surgery

Hepatobiliary and Pancreatic Services Produced: May 2021

Physiotherapy Services

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Introduction

This leaflet aims to provide advice on exercise following your surgery. Being fitter will help with your recovery and may help with your treatment (chemotherapy, radiotherapy or surgery).

Day 1 after your operation

Bed mobility

We will encourage you to get out of bed as soon as possible after your operation. This may be the same day or day after your operation. The ward physiotherapists or nurses will help you do this initially.

The most comfortable way of getting out of bed is to bend up your knees with your feet flat on the bed, then roll onto your side. Once you are on your side, put your legs over the edge of the bed and push up through your elbow.



Circulation exercises

It is important to start circulation exercises immediately after the operation to help reduce swelling and to prevent blood clots. Move your feet backwards and forwards briskly 10 to 20 times every 30 minutes. Circling your feet, and squeezing your buttocks together will help to increase your circulation.

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To give feedback about this information sheet, contact InformationForPatients@uhl-tr.nhs.uk

Exercises to be completed from Day 2.

1. Knee rolling

Lie on the bed, with your knees bent up and feet flat on the bed. Gently roll your knees together to the right side, then the middle, then to the left. Repeat this ten times, three times a day. This exercise will also help with relieving trapped wind.



2. Pelvic tilting

Lie on your back, with your knees bent up and feet flat on the bed. Gently pull in your tummy muscles then tilt your pelvis up to flatten your lower back. Hold it there for two to three seconds, then gently relax. Repeat this five times, three times a day.

You can increase the number of repetitions as you feel able. It is important not to overdo it though.



If the exercises are causing you any pain or discomfort, stop them immediately and ask your physiotherapist for further advice.

Walking

The best exercise after surgery is walking and this will start on the first day after your operation.

There are many benefits of walking, including:

- increased independence
- helping to prevent chest infections
- helping to prevent wound and urine infections
- reducing the risk of developing blood clots
- increasing your strength, fitness and endurance.

Walking (continued)

The nursing or physiotherapy staff will help you until you can walk safely by yourself. Once you can do so, you will be responsible for walking regularly and increasing the distance that you can go.

You may feel some weakness and tiredness when you first start walking, but this is normal. Most people are moving around freely about three to five days after surgery. Regular short walks are best, for example around your bed space, to the toilet, or just walking to look out of the window. By the time you are ready to go home you should aim to walk once every hour during the day.

You will not be taken to try the stairs, unless you have a particular concern about getting up and down your stairs at home. An occupational therapist may see you before you go home if you have particular concerns about managing at home with personal care tasks.

Milestones after your surgery

Weeks 1-2

Take it easy for the first two weeks at home. You will probably get tired easily, so have plenty of rest: you do not need to stay in bed though. After being at home for a few days you can build up your strength and stamina by having a short walk each day. Start with five to ten minute walks and gradually to add to your distance every day.

Weeks 2-3

You can start to make light meals and carry out light chores, such as wiping-up and dusting. Increase your walking time and distance each day. Use markers such as lampposts and trees so that you can see your progress. Some days you will feel better than others: this is quite normal.

Weeks 4-6

You can gradually do more household jobs, such as ironing and cooking. Break tasks down into smaller parts if you need to. Aim to be walking between 30-45 minutes six weeks after your operation. You must not do any heavy lifting or stand for long periods of time.

Weeks 6-12

Six to eight weeks after your operation you can start to do low-impact exercise such as jogging and cycling (on the flat). Swimming is another good form of exercise, but please note that your wound must be healed before swimming. Start these activities gradually. Common sense will guide you as to how much exercise your body can take.

Driving

You need to be sure that you can concentrate, move freely enough to ensure full visibility and be able to perform an emergency stop. You will also need to check with your insurance company that your insurance will cover you before you start driving again.

Different rules apply to HGV and PSV licence holders – you will need to contact the DVLA for further information.

Lifting

Do not lift anything heavy or awkward for at least six weeks after your operation.

Additional exercises

These exercises can be commenced from Day 2 after your operation. Aim for a maximum of 15 repetitions per exercise, if you cannot manage this, then aim for five and gradually increase.

1. Lying down:

Move your ankle down to point your toes. Then bring it up so it points to the ceiling. Change to other foot .



2. Lying down:

Place a rolled up towel or pillow under your knee. Raise your foot off the bed until your knee is straight. Lower your leg and relax. Repeat with the other leg.



3. Sitting: With alternate arms punch the air ahead at shoulder height.



4 .Sitting: Raise both arms up to the ceiling. Then relax.

Additional exercises (continued)

5. Sitting, with knees bent: Straighten your knee until your leg is straight, then gently lower. Repeat on the other leg



6. Sitting: With a small weight / object in your hand, bend your elbow, bringing the hand towards your shoulder.



Additional exercises (continued)

The following exercises are a little more challenging. These should be commenced as you feel able. Use light weights. Again aim for a maximum of 15 repetitions.

1. Lying down: Pull up your foot, straighten your knee and lift your whole leg off the bed. Hold for five seconds and then lower your leg and relax. Repeat with your other leg.



2. Lying down, with your knees bent: Squeeze your buttocks together and lift your bottom off the bed. Relax and lower your bottom down.



3. Sitting: Lift up your leg with the knee bent until back of your thigh lifts off the chair. Change legs.



4. Lie on one side, with bottom leg bent. Lift your top leg with the knee straight. Lower this leg down and repeat. Change sides.

5. Sitting. Using your arms to assist, stand up and then sit down again. This can be made more difficult by not using your arms and having a lower chair.



6. At the bottom of stairs or single step. Step up and down onto the step with alternative legs.



Contacts

If you have any questions or concerns please contact your nurse or physiotherapist.

Name:

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Contact number:

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