

Child health information factsheet

Advice for patients after a surgical operation

During a normal day, we all move about which makes us take deep breaths and cough without noticing. This stops secretions from building up in our chest.

However following surgery, you are less active, often more sleepy and you can have pain.

This means secretions can build up in your chest which may lead to a chest infection. Your secretions may also be thicker and stickier as you may not be allowed to eat and drink.

This leaflet gives you advice on how you can help to keep your chest clear, prevent a chest infection and get moving quicker.

Mobility

It is important to sit up in bed as much as possible, as this helps you take bigger breaths.

It is also important to get out of bed as soon as you are well enough, usually the day after your surgery.

You may feel slightly dizzy the first time you get up which is normal as you have spent time lying flat. This is why it is always best to have someone to help you when you first get up.

The nursing staff will help you to sit out in a chair and start walking to the toilet.

If you find moving uncomfortable due to pain please let your nurse know.

Deep Breathing

It is a good idea to regularly take some deeper breaths to help prevent a chest infection.

Take four deep long breaths every hour.

It is better to try breathing in slowly through your nose and out through your mouth to get the best deep breath.

If this is too hard (or if your child is too young) try some blowing games with bubbles, tissues and cotton wool balls.

Coughs

To clear any secretions you have, you need to cough. This can be uncomfortable because of your surgery.

Try putting a towel over your wound area, put your hand over the towel to help support your wound when you cough. It is important to try a cough even if it is difficult or weak. If it is still too painful or difficult, please tell your nurse.

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It is normal to have some phlegm after an operation, if you sit up, get out of bed, take deep breaths and cough it reduces the chances of getting a chest infection or other respiratory problems.

If you are having difficulties with the above advice tell your nurse who may ask a physiotherapist to see you.

If you have any questions, your nurse or ward physiotherapist can help. Below are some exercises to do while in bed.

Bed exercises

Keep your joints and muscles moving to stop them getting stiff, and help pump blood around the body.

Start these exercises as early as possible after your operation.

Wiggle your toes for ten seconds.

Wiggle your feet up and down.



Bend and straighten your knees.



Squash the back of your knee into the bed, hold for five seconds.



Squeeze your bottom muscles together and hold for five seconds.

Try to do ten of these exercises hourly, they should not be painful.

If you have any questions or concerns please contact

The paediatric physiotherapy department, B level, west wing,
Southampton General Hospital: **023 8079 4560**

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Braille or on audio tape, please telephone
023 8079 4688 for help.**