



# Physiotherapy Advice following your Gynaecology Operation

## Information for patients

This leaflet is intended for women who have had a gynaecology operation at the hospital. It has been written to give you greater understanding of how you can support your recovery by doing certain exercises and by avoiding things that might prevent a quick recovery. It may not answer all your questions, so if you have any further concerns please do not hesitate to ask your nurse or doctor.

**Doing the right kind of exercises, at the right time, can play a large part in your recovery and may help you to return to your normal activities sooner.**

## Exercise advice

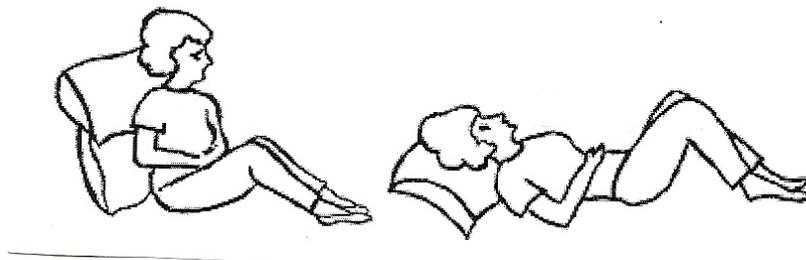
Be sure that you have adequate pain relief because the exercises could be uncomfortable.

### Day one (after the operation)

To reduce the effects of a general anaesthetic, you should practice the following exercises hourly throughout the day.

#### 1. Deep breathing exercises

Take a slow deep breath in through your nose, hold for two seconds and then sigh the air out of your mouth. Repeat three times. Practise the breathing exercises sitting up in bed, supported by pillows, or sitting out in a chair. You may start as soon as you wake up.





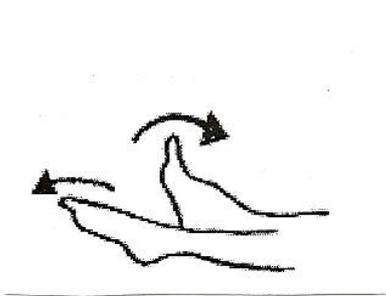
## 2. Coughing

Be sure that you can cough strongly and effectively if needed after your operation to clear any excess secretions. Don't worry about disturbing your stitches and staples, they will be very secure. You may find it more comfortable to cough whilst in the same position as suggested for your deep breathing exercises. If you have an abdominal incision, support it by holding a small towel or pillow firmly over your tummy. If your operation was through the vaginal route, place a hand over the pad between your legs.

## 3. Circulatory Exercises

These exercises are designed to improve the circulation in your legs whilst lying in bed or sitting in a chair. **Please do not lie or sit with your legs crossed as this is bad for your circulation.** Try to do these exercises every hour.

### Ankles



Bend and stretch the ankles up and down firmly and quickly. Repeat 10 times per hour.

### Knees

Tighten your thighs by pushing the backs of your knees down against the bed. Repeat five times every hour.

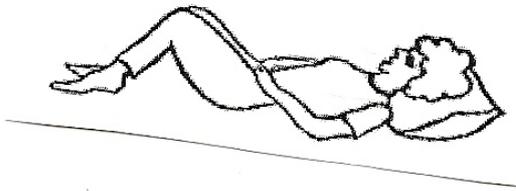
### Buttocks

Tighten your buttocks regularly to relieve pressure from your bottom. Repeat five times every hour.



**From Day two onwards (after the operation)**

Start all exercises by lying with the back of your head on a pillow, knees bent and a shoulder width apart, feet flat on the bed.



**1. Abdominal exercise**

Gently place your hands on your lower tummy. Breathe in through your nose and as you breathe out, gently pull your tummy away from your hands towards your back. Feel the muscles tighten, try to hold for a count of three and then relax. Breathe in and out normally.

Practice this exercise three times a day. You will gradually be able to hold for longer until you reach 10 seconds and can repeat 10 times.



**2. Pelvic tilting**

Place your hands in the hollow of your back. Tighten your tummy muscles (Exercise 1), flatten your lower back onto your hands and tilt your bottom. Breathe normally. Hold for three seconds and release gently.

Try to progress this exercise by tightening your tummy muscles and also pulling up your pelvic floor before continuing as above.



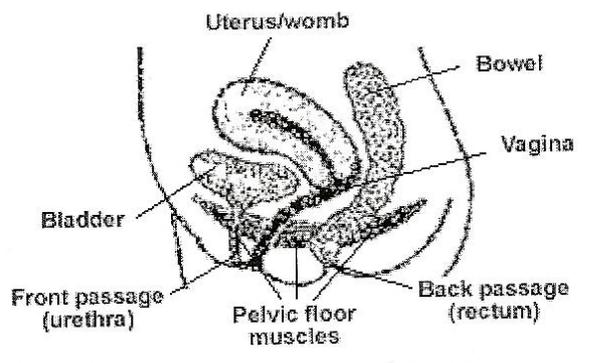
### 3. Knee rolling

Tighten your tummy muscles (Exercise 1) and gently lower both knees to one side as far as is comfortable. Bring them back to the middle and relax. Repeat to the other side.

Repeat each of these exercises four times, three times a day, and then do more as you feel able.

## Why do I need to exercise my pelvic floor?

The pelvic floor muscles are hammock shaped and line the base of your pelvis. They support the abdominal and pelvic organs when you stand and hold them closed securely when coughing, sneezing, jogging etc, so it is important that they are efficient, healthy and strong. Through these muscles pass the rectum, vagina and urethra (the front passage, from which you pass urine). Like all muscles, if not exercised regularly they will weaken and become less effective, possibly resulting in urinary incontinence (involuntary leakage of urine) and prolapse.



Pregnancy, the natural aging process, and gynaecological surgery will put added stress on these muscles. After surgery patients are encouraged to perform pelvic floor muscle exercises to reduce discomfort and swelling, and to build up strength and support. To maintain improved performance throughout life, you should continue to exercise regularly.



### How can I perform pelvic floor muscle exercises?

Tighten the muscles around the anus and draw them up, as if trying to stop yourself passing wind. At the same time tighten the muscles around the vagina and draw them up as if you are trying to stop passing urine. As you squeeze and lift the pelvic floor muscles keep the buttocks and tummy muscles relaxed and do not hold your breath. The exercise can be done in any position.

#### Exercise 1:

Hold the squeeze for a few seconds then relax for a few seconds. Gradually increase the hold time and the number that you do until you can hold the squeeze for up to 10 seconds and repeat 10 times.

#### Exercise 2:

Tighten the pelvic floor muscles quickly and strongly and then relax quickly. Do this up to 10 times during each session.

### How often should I do these exercises?

Practice at least three or four times a day.

### Do you have any useful tips?

- Always try to use your pelvic floor muscles before you cough, laugh, sneeze or lift an object.
- Associate doing the exercises with some of your everyday activities, such as washing up, ironing, watching television or answering the phone.
- Carry out the exercises on a daily basis to maintain performance for life. Improvement can be slow, so don't be discouraged.
- Drink at least two pints of fluid each day.



### Things to avoid

- Excessive weight gain as this creates extra load for the pelvic floor.
- Constipation as straining stretches the pelvic floor muscles.
- Strenuous heavy lifting as this places extra pressure on the pelvic floor, as does repeated lifting.
- Smoking, as a “smoker’s cough” can strain the pelvic floor.
- Excess tea/coffee/alcohol as they are diuretics (they make you pass urine more often).
- Drinking too little (less than recommended in useful tips above).
- Sudden movements. Try to contract your pelvic floor muscles before coughing, sneezing, jumping, jogging etc.
- Habit formation. Try not to empty your bladder too frequently (less than two-hourly) or you may reduce its capacity.

### What is the best method to use when getting out of bed?

On the first day after your operation you will usually spend some time sitting out of bed. Getting out of bed correctly will put less strain on your operation site. Bend both knees and roll onto your side by moving your shoulders and knees together. Push up by pressing your upper hand down onto the bed while you lower your feet to the floor. Sit on the edge of the bed and then stand by pushing with your legs and hands. Slowly stand up straight before beginning to walk.

### Posture and back care

It is very important to be aware of your posture and take special care for about six weeks after your surgery. A good posture will help prevent back ache, so stand tall and walk tall.

### Sitting

Sit upright in a supportive chair, with both feet on the floor. Do not slouch. You may find it helpful to place a small cushion or rolled towel in the small of your back to give support.

### Standing or walking



Avoid holding your tummy with your hands and slouching forwards. Stand upright with shoulders back, and bottom and tummy tucked in.

### **Lifting**

Do not lift heavy objects. Try to pull up your pelvic floor, tighten your tummy muscles and breathe as you lift anything. Remember to bend your knees and keep your back straight. Hold larger objects close to your body.

### **Before you go home**

The need for continued pain relief at home is very individual. Please discuss this with your nurse. If you have worries or concerns, please talk to the nurses or doctors on Fleming Ward.

### **After leaving hospital**

#### **Exercises**

Continue with the exercises in this leaflet for at least six weeks, preferably three months.

#### **Rest**

Take a daily rest on your bed for about an hour for the first six weeks.

#### **Walking**

This is a very valuable exercise. Try to walk for about 20 minutes at least once a day. Hills and stairs are quite safe, but build up speed and distance gradually.

#### **Driving**

Check with your consultant, and with your insurance company, but do not expect to drive for about four to six weeks, depending on your surgery. Make sure you can wear a seatbelt comfortably and perform manoeuvres and an emergency stop without undue pain.



## Work

Although it depends on the type of job you have, you should not expect to return to full time work until after about six weeks. Always get approval from your GP to return to work.

## Sports

You should get approval from your GP to return to sports, swimming, aerobics etc.

## Gardening

Avoid gardening for a few weeks. Start slowly.

## Sexual intercourse

How soon you feel ready to resume sexual activity will depend very much on the extent of your vaginal surgery, your individual rate of healing, and your personal preference. Many women prefer to wait about six weeks to be sure that the area is completely healed. This is because arousal (not only intercourse) tends to have a stretching effect on the vagina and could interfere with the healing process. More information can be found in the booklet ["Hysterectomy, Vaginal Repair, and Surgery for Stress Incontinence"](#) that your consultant will have given you at your Outpatient appointment.

## Household activities - "dos and don'ts"

### DOS:

- Washing, showering and bathing
- Light housework, such as dusting, ironing, making drinks
- Washing and drying dishes
- Preparing light meals

### DON'Ts:

- Decorating
- Heavy lifting
- Shaking the duvet or heavy bedding



- It is OK to prepare small meals (ie salads or sandwiches) but avoid cooking large meals using an oven
- Heavy housework

Take things slowly. Be very careful for the first six weeks after your operation. Gradually build up activity over the next six weeks until you feel able to resume your normal lifestyle.

**Contact Telephone Number**

**Fleming Ward - 01895 279528**



## Languages/ Alternative Formats

Please call PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) if you require this information in other languages, large print or audio format on 01895 279 973.

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Jeżeli chciałbyś uzyskać te informacje w innym języku, w dużej czcionce lub w formacie audio, poproś pracownika oddziału o kontakt z biurem informacji pacjenta (patient information) pod numerem telefonu: 01895 279973.

如果你需要這些資料的其他語言版本、大字体、或音頻格式，請致電01895 279 973 查詢。

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