

Recovery at home after abdominal surgery

Gynaecology Department Patient Information Leaflet

Introduction

This booklet is for people who have had abdominal surgery. It aims to answer queries that you may have after your operation.

What can I do when I get home?

Everybody is different but you may feel tired for the first few weeks after you get home from hospital. However, although you need to rest, lying in bed during the day is not good for you because it increases your risk of developing blood clots in large veins, constipation and a chest infection. Start some of your normal daily activities when you get home and build up slowly. It is quite safe for you to go up and down the stairs from your first day home.

Exercise

Walking is an excellent exercise for you, so try to take a short walk every day. Swimming is another ideal exercise which can be started in two to three weeks by most women. You should avoid contact sports for at least six weeks.

Physiotherapy

You will need to continue to do the exercises you have been shown in hospital by the physiotherapist. If you have been given elastic stockings to help prevent blood clots in large veins, you are advised to wear them for three weeks after you get home. You can take them off to wash them, as needed.

Lifting

For the first one to two weeks, you should restrict lifting to small objects such as a kettle, small saucepan, or a one litre bottle of liquid. You should avoid any heavy lifting or straining, such as lifting shopping bags or children, or strenuous activities such as vacuum cleaning, until at least four to six weeks after your operation. After this time, build up slowly and remember to always lift with your knees bent and your back straight.

The wound

You will need to keep the wound dry for the first 48 hours after you get home. After this time, you can take any dressings off and bath or shower as normal.

We recommend that you avoid perfumed products around the wound for the first few weeks. After washing, pat the wound dry with clean disposable tissue or allow it to air dry. Keeping your wound clean and dry is helpful for healing. If you have clips or stitches that need to be removed, the nurses will let you know when this will be done.

When can I drive?

You should also make sure that you can sit in your car, fasten the seatbelt, press all the pedals and turn your head without any discomfort. You should be able to do an emergency stop without any discomfort.

Do not drive if you have any discomfort that may distract you. It is very important that you check with your insurance company as to when you can drive again after surgery. Some insurance companies will not allow you to drive for a certain amount of weeks after surgery.

When can I go back to work?

Most women will need to take at least six weeks off work. If you need a sick note, ask the nursing staff before you leave hospital. Depending on the type of work you do, you may need more time off. Your GP can advise you about this.

When can I have sex again?

It is sensible to wait for four to six weeks or until the discomfort from the operation has gone. After this, start gently.

When to seek medical advice

Medical advice can be sought from the hospital department that performed your operation, from your GP, or from NHS 111. You should seek medical advice if you experience any of the following:

- Burning or stinging when you pass urine or needing to pass urine frequently – this can be a symptom of urinary infection.
- Pain, redness or swollen skin around the wound, or discharge from the wound – this can be a symptom of infection in the wound.
- Increasing pain in your stomach, feeling unwell or feverish – this can be a symptom of an infection or complication from your surgery.
- Pain, redness, or swelling in your leg – this can be a symptom of a blood clot in a large vein.
- Heavy or smelly vaginal bleeding or discharge – this can be a symptom of infection related to your surgery.

Leaflets cannot take the place of talks with health professionals. If there is anything you do not understand, or you are worried after your operation, contact:

The ward you were discharged from, or the Gynaecology Outpatient Team on 01384 244584 (8.30am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)

Russells Hall Hospital switchboard number: 01384 456111

This leaflet can be downloaded or printed from:

<http://dgft.nhs.uk/services-and-wards/obstetrics-and-gynaecology/>

Tell us what you think of this leaflet

We hope you found this leaflet helpful. We welcome any feedback that may improve the information we provide to patients. If you would like to tell us what you think of this leaflet, please contact dgft.patient.information@nhs.net

This leaflet can be made available in large print, audio version and in other languages, please call 0800 073 0510.

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此宣传单可提供大字版本、音频版本和其它语言版本，请拨打电话：0800 073 0510。

Ulotka dostępna jest również w dużym druku, wersji audio lub w innym języku. W tym celu zadzwoń pod numer 0800 073 0510.

ਇਹ ਪਰਚਾ ਵੱਡੇ ਅੱਖਰਾਂ, ਬੋਲ ਕੇ ਰੀਕਾਰਡ ਕੀਤਾ ਹੋਇਆ ਅਤੇ ਦੂਸਰੀਆਂ ਭਾਸ਼ਾਵਾਂ ਵਿਚ ਵੀ ਪ੍ਰਾਪਤ ਹੋ ਸਕਦਾ ਹੈ, 0800 073 0510 ਤੇ ਫੋਨ ਕਰੋ ਜੀ।

Aceasta brosură poate fi pusă la dispoziție tipărită cu caractere mari, versiune audio sau în alte limbi, pentru acest lucru va rugăm sunați la 0800 073 0510.

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