

Physiotherapy for heart surgery

Date:

Name:

Physiotherapist:

Do only the exercise stated and shown by your physiotherapist. This leaflet is a guide for your own personal use, not to be used by any other persons.

Physiotherapy

Clinical Diagnostic and
Support Services Centre
Patient Information

Introduction

This booklet is designed to give some guidelines and information about how the physiotherapist at The James Cook University Hospital will help you in your recovery following your heart operation.

Physiotherapy plays an important part in your recovery after your operation.

Your physiotherapy treatment will focus on three main areas:

- Chest care
- General mobility
- Exercise

The exercise instructions in this booklet are given as a general guideline only as each patient is treated as an individual and the exercise regime may vary slightly depending on the type of operation or your consultant's instructions.

If you are in doubt about the information given in this booklet, please ask your physiotherapist.

All the exercises contained within this booklet will be taught to you by your physiotherapist.

Physiotherapy before your operation

You may see a physiotherapist prior to your operation, he/she will explain and teach you exercises to practice before and after your operation. This is usually done during the pre-assessment clinics.

Your physiotherapy exercises will include:

- Deep breathing exercises
- Leg exercises
- Postural exercises
- Coughing and huffing
- Shoulder exercises
- General mobility

Chest care

Chest physiotherapy begins on the first day after your operation. Some people become chesty in the first few days following surgery due to extra phlegm production as result of:

- Any previous chest condition e.g. bronchitis.
- Smoking, which can increase the amount of phlegm produced after an operation
- The discomfort/pain from your chest wound can stop you from taking a deep breath in and coughing.
- For the first few days you may not be as mobile as you would normally be and so you do not breathe as deeply.

It is important that any phlegm in your chest is cleared before it becomes infected. Therefore you should practice the deep breathing exercises and supported huffing or coughing as taught by your physiotherapist.

If you practice before your operation it is easier to remember these exercises afterwards.

Breathing exercises:

- Sit upright with your hands placed over the sides of your chest.
- Take a deep breath in slowly through your nose.
- Hold this breath in for one to two seconds and then.
- Breathe the air out slowly through your mouth.
- Repeat 5 times, then huff 5 times.

To do a huff take a medium sized breath in then force the air out quickly through an open mouth, as if you are steaming up a window/glass.

If you have any phlegm in your throat then have a supported cough.

Coughing – always take a deep breath in and have a good strong cough, whilst supporting your chest wound with a small pillow.

Take normal relaxed breaths after coughing.

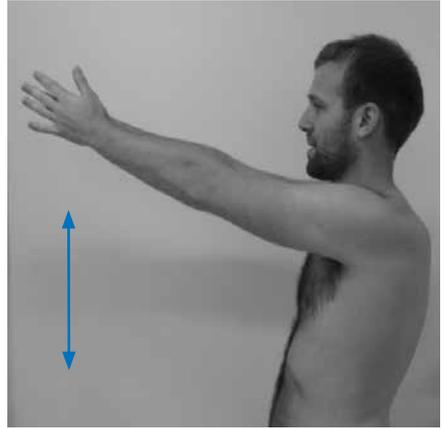
Ask for pain killers after your operation if you find it difficult to breathe deeply, huff or cough due to pain.

From the first day after your surgery we will encourage you to begin exercising. This may initially involve some gentle arm and leg exercises to prevent stiffness, help circulation and will progress to walking.

Arm exercises:

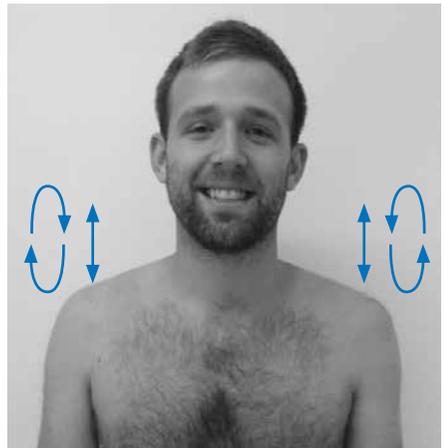
- While standing or seated, raise both arms straight forward over your head, then back down.

Repeat five to ten times.



- Gentle shoulder shrugs (up/down) and shoulder rolls (forward/backwards)

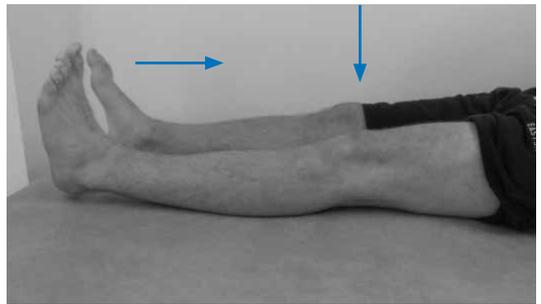
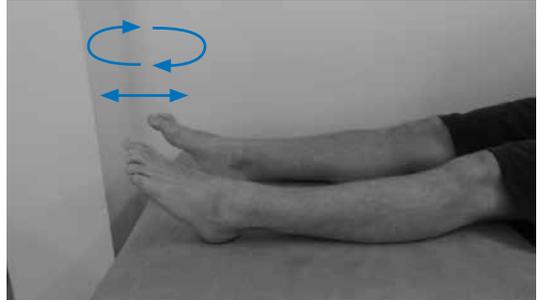
Repeat five to ten times.



Gentle leg exercises:

These exercises are taught to help keep your muscles strong and promote your circulation. To do these exercises sit on the bed with your legs well supported.

- Bend and straighten your ankles and toes.
Repeat ten times.
- Circle your feet from ankles round in one direction and then repeat in the other direction.
Repeat ten times each direction.
- Tighten your thigh muscles on the front of your legs by pressing the back of your knee into the bed and pulling your toes towards you.
- Tighten your thigh muscles as previously and keep your leg straight and lift leg off the bed a small height. Hold for two seconds, then slowly lower it.
Repeat ten times with each leg.



- Straighten one leg out in front of you whilst sitting. Hold for five seconds, then relax.

Repeat ten times with each leg.



General mobility

Your breastbone takes approximately three months to heal. To prevent placing stress on your sternum (breastbone) you should avoid pushing through your arms.

You are advised to put your hands on your knees and shuffle your bottom when getting out of bed/chair for the next three months.

NB Always protect your breastbone at all times. Clicking and occasional pain is expected as it takes about three months to heal up. However, if your breastbone is clicking more often than expected, please contact your doctor/GP.

Physiotherapy

The physiotherapist will visit you on day one and review the exercises you were taught before your operation in the pre admission clinic.

Following your operation your breathing may require oxygen support whilst recovering in intensive care or high dependency unit. You will be attached to monitors, catheters and lines for your drugs or fluids. Please do not be upset, this is all routine and it is nothing to be concerned about.

It is important that you follow the advice of your physiotherapist and that you continue exercising between physiotherapy visits as instructed.

From day two onwards following your operation you will begin to progress your mobility with your physiotherapist and before you are discharged home your physiotherapist may take you on an exercise bike for a few minutes and complete a flight of stairs if required.

Routine patients are usually discharged home within seven days.



Activities of daily living:

The physiotherapist will monitor and assess your ability to do simple tasks during your hospital stay.

Problems will be identified and treated as appropriate together with other members of the team.

Posture

Once you have left the hospital it is your responsibility to check and correct your posture.

Try standing in front of a mirror to help in adjusting and correcting your posture or stand with your back to a wall pushing your shoulders back.



After discharge from hospital

After your operation, your heart function should be improved and your ability to exercise will also gradually increase.

However because of your heart problem you may have been unable to exercise for some time, so your increase in activity needs to be done gradually, to build up your fitness slowly.

Remember it is not unusual to feel a little bit tired when you first get home. Make sure you have a good night sleep and you get up at your normal time.

Have a short sleep after lunch if you feel tired during the day.

Regular exercise will:

- Make you feel more healthy and well in yourself.
- Help you feel more confident, look better and help with weight control.
- Strengthen your heart, keep it healthier, improve your circulation and breathing.
- Keep your blood pressure and blood cholesterol levels down.
- Help reduce stress by relieving tension.
- Give you more energy so you can do more, enjoy life to the full and get back to work and hobbies.
- Keep you looking and feeling younger.
- Assist your body's natural defence to fight infections and diseases.

Exercises for the first four to six weeks after discharge

Walking:

Walking is important in your recovery following surgery and should become part of your daily routine. Walking improves your fitness after your heart operation and should start immediately after discharge from hospital.

Try to take two walks per day outdoors and start off with the maximum distance you have walked with your physiotherapist whilst in hospital. Gradually increase the distance and pace as you feel able which maybe daily or every other day.

As you increase your walking distance you will be able to take one long walk per day instead of two. Start off by walking on level and progress to slopes as you improve.

If you live on a hill, walk shorter distances, uphill first. If you become short of breath, stop and rest, you should recover within a minute or two, if not you may be doing too much.

Do not walk if you feel unwell, it is very cold or windy/wet outside or just after a meal.

Some people are able to walk between one and two miles within six to eight weeks of the operation, but this is only a guide as everyone's rate of progress varies.

Walking schedule

The walking schedule below is merely a guide as everyone will differ, however your physiotherapist will discuss this with you prior to your discharge.

Date	Week	Walking time	Walks per day	Other exercise
	1	5-10 mins	2	
	2	10-15 mins	2	
	3	20 mins	2	
	4	25-30 mins	1	
	5	30-40 mins	1	
	6	45 mins	1	

If you have access to a exercise bike or pedals, you can use this to improve your fitness by increasing the length of time on the bike rather than the resistance.

If at any time you are worried about exercising or your progress in general, do ask your GP, or consultant at your next out patient visit.

You can contact your hospital physiotherapist on 01642 850850 and ask for bleep number 1487.

Your physiotherapist is available everyday between 8.15am - 4.15pm.

What happens if I have a chest infection?

The signs of a chest infection may be...

- Coughing up more phlegm than normal.
- Your phlegm may change colour- white/yellow green.
- You may have a temperature.
- You may be more short of breath than normal.

Consult the doctor immediately if you have a chest infection, breathing exercises will help you clear phlegm effectively. You will have done these breathing exercises in the early days after your heart operation.

However, you may not remember them exactly so please refer to page four in this booklet.

General advice

After six weeks you may introduce more tasks eg hoovering, light gardening, cleaning the car to your daily routine.

With your consultant's advice you may return to activities such as:

Cycling (outdoors)	2 / 3 months
Swimming	3 months
Fishing	2 / 3 months
Country walks	2 / 3 months
Golf	3 months
Ballroom dancing	2 months
Bowling	2 months
Badminton/tennis	3 months

- You should not drive until you have seen your consultant in the outpatient clinic (approximately 6 weeks after discharge).
- You will be sent an outpatient appointment in the post to see your consultant four to six weeks following your surgery.
- At three months after your operation you should be able to do everything you did before your operation. Consult your doctor before you participate in any competitive or contact sports.
- Holidays abroad - follow your consultant's advice from your outpatient appointment.

- Please discuss return to work with your doctors, either when in hospital or at your outpatient appointment.
- If you return to work make sure you continue with your exercises on a regular basis ie.daily if possible.
- Wound pain discomfort may persist for a few weeks after your operation. This is due to the healing process. You may continue to take tablets supplied by your GP.
- You may be referred for cardiac rehabilitation after your operation (approximately six weeks). You should follow the advice given to you at the rehabilitation classes by the nurse or physiotherapist.

Physiotherapy

This booklet is designed only as a guideline.

If you have any comments on the booklet or the physiotherapy service please contact the rehabilitation centre on 01642 854453.

Comments, compliments, concerns or complaints

South Tees Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust is concerned about the quality of care you receive and strives to maintain high standards of health care. However, we do appreciate that there may be an occasion where you, or your family, feel dissatisfied with the standard of service you receive. Please do not hesitate to tell us about your concerns as this helps us to learn from your experience and to improve service for future patients

If you have a concern or question regarding care of the service received, please discuss with / contact a member of the clinical team / matron in the first instance, who may be able to answer your questions without delay. If you feel you cannot discuss your concern with the clinical team, **The Patient Advice and Liaison service** can advise and support patients, families and carers and help sort out problems on your behalf. This service is available, and based, at The James Cook University Hospital but also covers the Friarage Hospital In Northallerton, our community hospitals and community health services. Please ask a member of staff for further information.

If you require this information in a different format please contact Freephone 0800 0282451

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