



Surgery

North Bristol **NHS**
NHS Trust

Post Operative Breathing Exercises Following Abdominal Surgery



Exceptional healthcare, personally delivered

After any operation involving an incision in the abdomen, there is a risk of developing a chest infection which may prolong and complicate your hospital admission.

Research shows that the most effective way to prevent a post operative chest infection is by getting out of bed and walking as soon as possible after your operation under the guidance and assistance of the nursing or physiotherapy staff. In the majority of cases patients get out of bed on the day after their operation and will be walking short distances on the ward within a few days.

The risk of developing a post operative chest infection may be reduced by performing breathing exercises and ensuring that any sputum is coughed up promptly.

If you feel that the pain you are experiencing is preventing you from taking a deep breath or coughing effectively, please inform your nurse, physiotherapist or doctor.

Breathing Exercises

- Start in a comfortable position, ideally sitting upright in the bed or chair with your shoulders relaxed.
- Take a long, slow deep breath in, as much as possible. Hold this breath for 3 seconds.
- Slowly breath out.
- Take 3 more deep breaths in the same way. Then return to breathing normally.

Coughing

The breathing exercise should be followed by a cough. It is very important to cough effectively after an operation so that you can clear any sputum promptly. Discomfort may be reduced by using a folded towel or pillow to

support your incision while coughing. If you feel that you are unable to clear your chest effectively or are concerned about an excessive amount of sputum, please inform your nurse who will refer you to the respiratory physiotherapist.

Repeat the breathing exercises and coughing at regular intervals throughout the first few days following your operation. They may be discontinued when you are able to walk a moderate distance on the ward, for instance to the bathroom, if you feel your chest is clear.

NHS Constitution. Information on your rights and responsibilities. Available at www.nhs.uk/aboutnhs/constitution [Last Accessed March 2010]

**PATIENT
APPROVED** 

How to contact us:



www.nbt.nhs.uk/physiotherapy

If you or the individual you are caring for need support reading this leaflet please ask a member of staff for advice.