

Fit for Surgery.....

Helping yourself towards a faster recovery



Introduction

Surgery today is safer than ever. The majority of patients undergoing surgery make a full recovery and return to their previous level of health. However, a small proportion of patients will suffer a complication after surgery. This may include an infection, or problems with the function of a body organ such as the heart, lungs or kidneys. Such complications can result in a prolonged hospital stay, and may even result in longer-term ill health.

Patients with pre-existing medical conditions undergoing major operations are at the highest risk of complications after their surgery.

Being in the best condition and health that you can be before your surgery will give you a better chance of recovering quickly from your operation and reduce your risk of complications.

NHS Lothian aims to ensure that your surgical journey is as safe and uneventful as possible. This patient information leaflet offers advice and support on how you can prepare yourself **physically and mentally** for your surgery and recovery.



Before your surgery

You could compare the recovery from surgery to doing some exercise. When you exercise, your heart and lungs need to work harder to pump blood and nutrients to your active muscles. Similarly after surgery, the heart and lungs need to work harder to pump blood and nutrients to the healing tissue, allowing the body to repair, regenerate and fight inflammation.

You may have an increased risk of suffering a complication after your surgery if you undertake certain lifestyle choices such as smoking, increased alcohol consumption and low level of fitness.

These risks are modifiable, which means that you can change them in order to reduce your own chance of suffering a complication. In the weeks leading up to your operation, it is advisable that you:

- Stop or cut down on smoking.
- Stop completely or halve your alcohol intake.
- Be as active as possible, including physical exercise into your daily routine. Aim for at least 30 minutes of exercise per day such as walking, swimming or gardening.
- Practice the post-operative exercise and breathing techniques that are illustrated in this booklet.

Your anaesthetist will provide you with the most appropriate anaesthetic and pain-relief method for the type of surgery you are having. This is important so that you are comfortable enough to complete your breathing exercises, get up-and-about, and eat and drink as soon as possible.

After your surgery

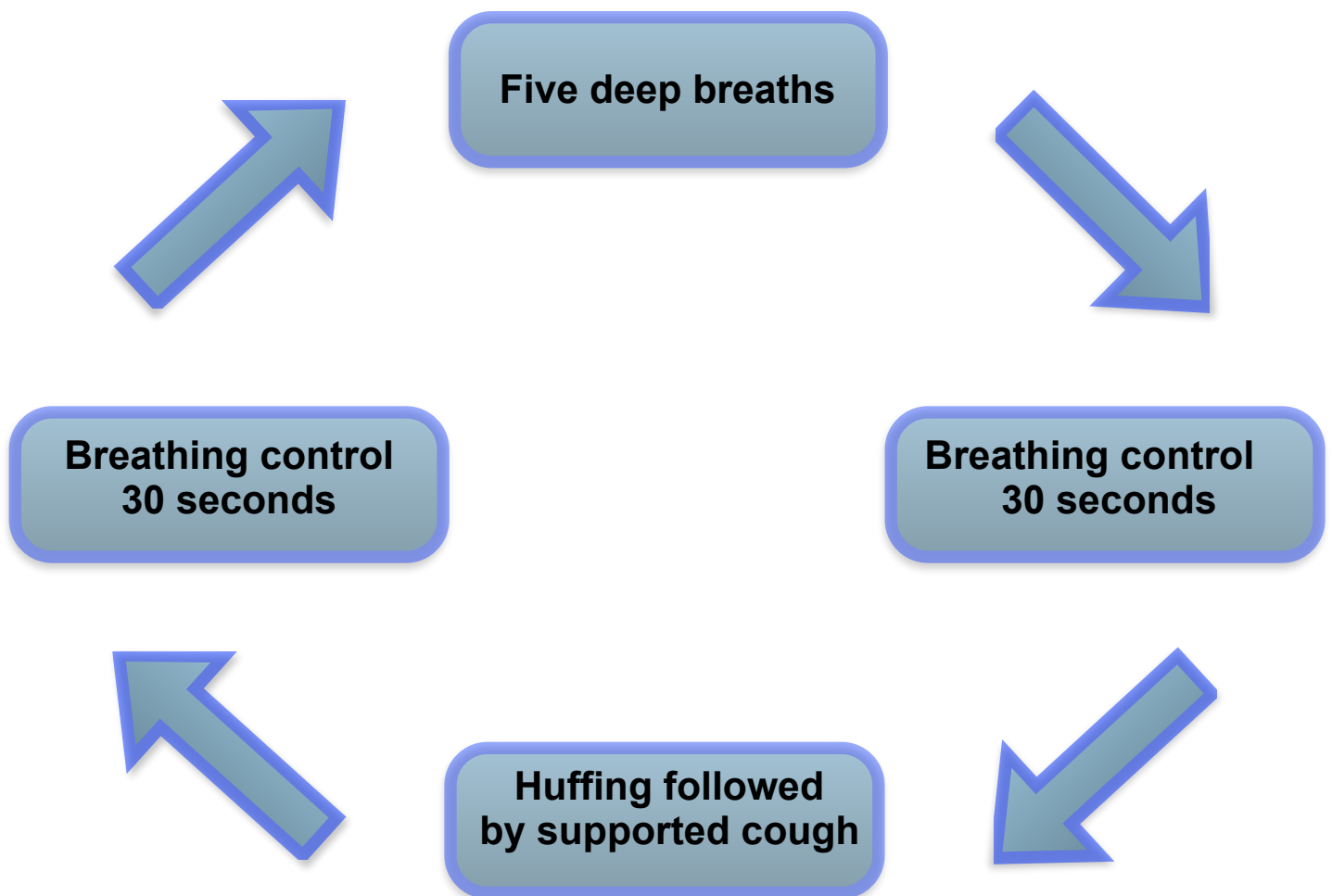
The medical staff, nurses and physiotherapists will assist with setting realistic personal goals in your recovery and encourage you to achieve them, right from the moment you awaken after your surgery.

Beginning on the evening after your surgery, you should expect to actively work towards some of the targets outlined on the following pages.



Breathing exercises

At least every hour try to repeat this cycle five times:



- **Deep breaths.** Breathe in slowly as deeply as you comfortably can, then hold for 5 seconds before breathing out
- **Breathing control.** Normal relaxed breathing
- **Huffing.** Make an “O” shape with your mouth and breathe out slightly harder, squeezing the breath out like steaming up a mirror or cleaning glasses. Repeat twice.
- **Supported cough.** Use a rolled up towel to support your wound area, or anywhere that you are tender. If pain stops you from being able to cough your nurse will provide additional pain-relief.

Bedside exercises

At least five times a day try one or more of the following exercises at your bedside:

Seated marching

In a seated position, lift your leg to bring your knee towards your chest. Repeat 10 times for each leg.



Side leg raises

Hold onto a chair or frame for balance and lift your leg out to the side. Repeat 5-10 times each leg.



Standing squats

Hold on to your chair and bend your knees to lower your bottom towards the floor. Repeat 5-10 times.

Mobilisation

You should aim to be up and walking as soon as possible after surgery.

Following the steps below can help you to mobilise safely during your recovery from surgery.

- Sit out of bed on your chair.
- Walk to the bathroom. Initially with, and then without assistance.
- Walk away from your bed-space for 5-10 metres.
- Take up to five separate walks per day of increasing length and duration.

Gaining confidence

You may feel that support or assistance is required for your first walk after surgery.

Nurses, physiotherapists and support workers will be happy to help you.

ERAS Walkways

Some hospitals within NHS Lothian will have walkways with distance-markers in the corridors next to the wards which have been provided by the Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) programme. If these are available, you may want to ask your nurse or physiotherapist to direct you to these walkways when you feel confident to do so.

Move More Edinburgh



Move More Edinburgh is delighted to support the Fit for Surgery initiative by offering free organised activities before and after your surgery, including gentle movement, walking and circuit classes.

The classes will take place in Edinburgh Leisure venues as well as some local community spaces. Following participation in one or more of the physical activity sessions, you will be directed towards other Edinburgh Leisure and community activities to continue with your physical activity.

We can arrange for you to be contacted by a representative from Move More Edinburgh to discuss how best we can help you achieve your goals. Alternatives are available for people living in East Lothian and Midlothian.

Summary

Try setting yourself daily goals based on the advice in this patient information leaflet both before and after your operation, and see if you can achieve them. Aim to continue these activities in the weeks after your surgery to help your recovery and rehabilitation. Staff are here to support and help you recover from your surgery. For further information regarding this advice, please feel free to ask a member of your medical or nursing team.

Interpretation and Translation

For a copy of this leaflet in a larger print, Braille or your community language, please telephone the department you are being admitted to.



Notes