

What is physiotherapy?

Physiotherapy involves looking at a number of different body systems.

- **Chest:** assessment through looking, listening, feeling and often making your child cough. Chest physiotherapy can help to prevent chest infections.
- **Mobility/rehabilitation:** encouraging your child to return to their normal mobility/independence as soon as possible after an operation.
- **Positioning:** to optimise breathing and promote recovery.

Why is Physiotherapy Needed?

Due to the nature of the surgery that your child has had there are many aspects which may limit and slow the speed of your child recovery.

- **General anaesthetic:** a general anaesthetic can cause the lungs to become drier than normal making it difficult to clear secretions.
- **Pain:** post-operative pain is a major factor in preventing your child taking deep breaths and having a strong cough, again making it harder to clear secretions.
- **Prolonged bed rest:** can reduce the lung volumes of your child, cause joints to become stiff, muscles to be weak, and can also increase the risk of DVT (deep vein thrombosis) in older children.
- **Nausea:** Post-operative drugs can cause nausea which can limit deep breathing and mobility.

Aims of physiotherapy:

- To promote a good clear chest through strong coughs
- To get up and walking as soon as possible to reduce the risk of DVT, and to increase lung volumes, secretion clearance and muscle strength.
- To get home as soon as possible

It is important that your child drinks plenty to help them clear any secretions and that their pain is under control to help with deep breathing, effective cough and mobility.

Treatment

Treatment may involve one or more different techniques. Your physiotherapist will advise which is the most appropriate for your child and may include a range of techniques for example:

- **Positioning:** preferably reclined sitting in bed or lying on their side. Your child should avoid being slumped where possible.
- **Blowing games:** blowing bubbles, windmills, rockets etc.
- **Deep Breathing or Active Cycle Breathing Technique:** your physiotherapist will teach your child how to do these exercises.
- **Supportive Cough:** encourage your child to or assist them to hug a towel over their wound to support their cough.
- **Bed exercises:** encourage your child to gently bend and straighten their hips and knees and pull their toes up towards their head and then push them away from them.
- **Mobilising:** encourage your child to start sitting out in a chair and walking short distances. Your child may feel a pull over the scar on their tummy and this is normal and will gradually improve.



Pysiotherapy Advice Following Abdominal Surgery

Information for Patients

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