



GETTING GOING AFTER SURGERY

Improving Your Recovery from an Operation

Patient Information

Getting going after Surgery, RIE v1.0
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Introduction

After your operation your body needs time to heal. However, during this recovery period it is **important that you continue to be active** and **try to get moving again sooner rather than later**.

Research has shown that there are lots of benefits to getting out of bed early and returning to normal activities. This is part of a program called **Enhanced Recovery After Surgery**, also known as **ERAS**.

Everybody's recovery is different, but this booklet provides some information about what you can expect, and some targets for you to work towards after your operation.

Recovery Begins Before Surgery...

Recovery from surgery actually **starts before your operation even begins**. The NHS Lothian '**Fit for Surgery**' booklet has more information about how you can prepare for surgery to improve your chances of a good recovery.



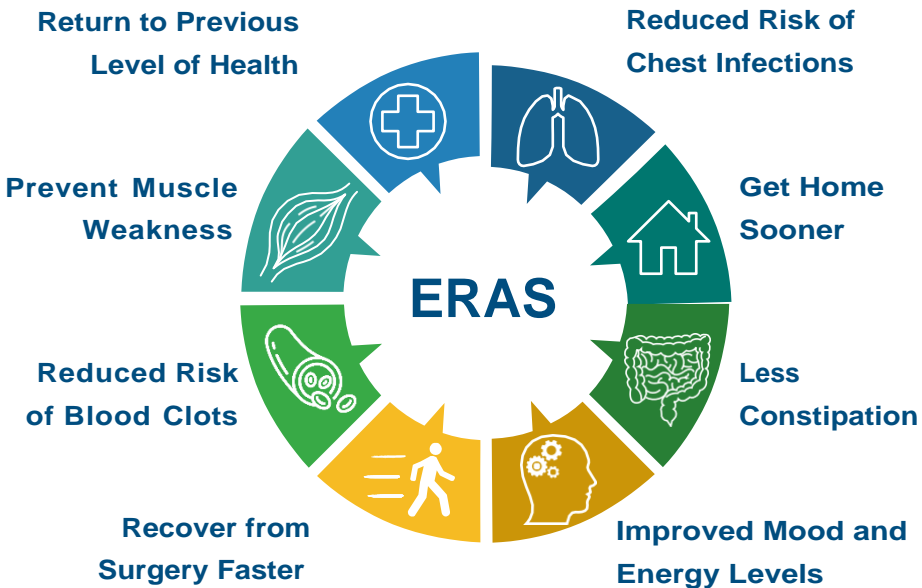
['NHS Lothian Fit for Surgery'](#)

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS)

ERAS aims to get you back to your normal health as quickly as possible after a major operation. This includes:

- ▶ Giving you the **best pain relief to get you moving more quickly**
- ▶ Allowing you to **start eating and drinking earlier**
- ▶ **Reducing the time** you have **catheters and drips** in place
- ▶ **Teaching you exercises** to help you recover after your operation

Benefits of the ERAS programme include:



What to Expect

The doctors and nurses will help you to **set realistic personal goals** in your recovery and encourage you to achieve them. This process starts right from the moment you wake up after your operation.

You will be given an **ERAS diary** which gives you an idea of what you might be able to achieve each day, helps you chart your progress and allows you to reflect on how you are getting on.

Everybody's recovery is different, but an idea of what you can expect is:

Day of Operation

- ▶ Aim to **sit up in bed**, or out of bed if you are able.
- ▶ **Start performing breathing exercises** (see Page 9)



Day 1

- ▶ Aim to be **out of bed, either in a chair or standing, for as long as possible** today
- ▶ Start taking **short walks**, with assistance from the nurses if needed.
- ▶ Get **washed and changed into your own clothes**. The nursing staff will help you with this.
- ▶ Perform **breathing exercises every hour** that you are awake (see Page 9)
- ▶ Perform **mobility exercises 5 times a day** (see Page 11)



Day 2

- ▶ Aim to be **sitting out of bed in a chair** for at least **6 hours** today
- ▶ Continue the **breathing and mobility exercises** you were doing on Day 1
- ▶ Aim to **gradually increase the distance you are walking**
- ▶ We will encourage you to become more independent and to get dressed if you feel able



Day 3

- ▶ Ideally you will be starting to think about getting home in the next couple of days
- ▶ Keep making good progress, **remain active and slowly increase the amount you do each day**



How Will I Feel?

During your recovery some days will go better than others. Using the ERAS diary will help you **reflect on the progress you are making**, even on the days that are not going so well.

Feeling Sick

Feeling sick is not unusual after surgery, but there will **always be anti-sickness medicine available**. You should tell the nurses or doctors looking after you if you are feeling sick.



Tiredness

Recovering from surgery requires a lot of energy as your body heals. This will make you feel **more tired than normal**.



It is important to get enough **good quality sleep at night** to allow you to be active during the day. You may want to consider bringing an eye mask and ear plugs to help you sleep while in hospital.

Pain

You may be worried that pain will stop you from moving, but there are a range of pain relief options to help you.



Although you may not be totally pain free, you **should be able to do the mobility and breathing exercises**. If it is too painful to do these you should tell the nurses or doctors looking after you so that they can help.

The NHS Lothian '**Pain Relief After Surgery**' booklet has more information on pain relief options and the role of the Acute Pain Team.

The Team Looking After You

Getting going with your recovery after surgery may seem daunting, but we are here to support you through this process.

The staff at NHS Lothian work together to make your recovery go as smoothly as possible, but it all starts with you:



**Surgeons and
Ward Doctors**



Ward Nurses



**Support
Workers**



Physiotherapists



Dietitians



**Specialist
Nurses**

Food and Drink

Eating after an abdominal operation is not dangerous. In fact, it helps make the muscles and nerves in your bowel start working again.

Eating and Drinking

You will normally be able to **drink water soon after your operation.** You can drink **as much water as you feel able.**



Hopefully, by the first day you will be able to start **eating.** Your surgeon or nurse will review your diet and give you advice each day. There is lots of choice on the hospital menu. If you have any dietary requirements that are not met by the menu then please let the staff know.

You may find that your appetite is reduced or that you feel sick at times. It is usually **easier to eat little and often.**



To help with this there are **snacks available on the ward.** You can walk to the patient snack fridge to help yourself. Ask the nurses what is available on your ward and they will show you where they are. Your family can also bring snacks from home.

Supplement Drinks

You should try to have some supplement drinks (milk or juice based) in the first few days after surgery. The drinks are kept in the patient snack fridges on the ward. You are welcome to help yourself. Have drinks between meals so that you don't fill yourself up and still have an appetite for other food.



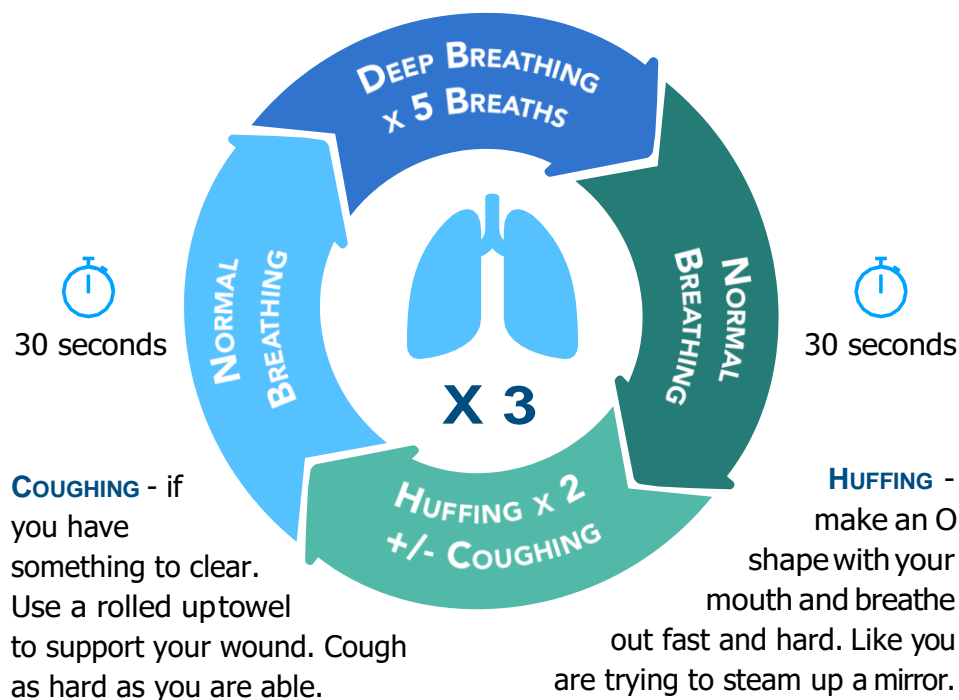
Please let the nurses know what you eat and drink, or even better **keep a record in your ERAS diary.**

Breathing Exercises

It is really important that you are able to **breathe deeply and cough** after your operation. This keeps your lungs open, helps you clear secretions and **stops you getting a chest infection or pneumonia**.

You should try to do these exercises **every hour that you are awake**:

Breathe in slowly and deeply
Hold for 2-3 seconds then breathe out



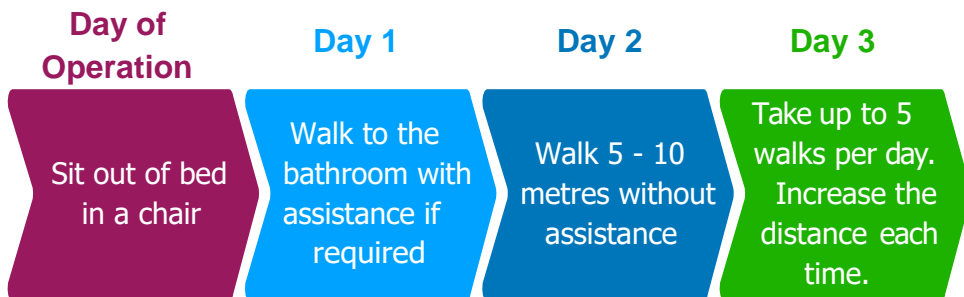
Every Hour Repeat Cycle 3 Times

If you feel it is too sore to do your breathing exercises **please tell the doctors and nurses looking after you** so that they can help you.

Getting Moving Again

You should aim to be **up and walking as soon as possible after surgery**. This is very important because it **stops your muscles getting weak and prevents blood clots**.

Try taking the following steps:



Nurses, physios and support workers will all be happy to help if you feel you need support or assistance.

Mobility Exercises

When you are able, try these **mobility exercises 5 times per day**:

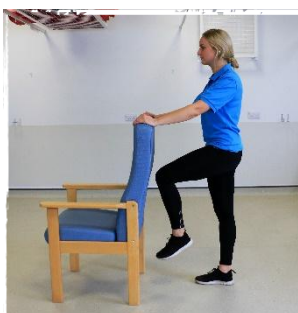
Leg Extension



Raise one leg straight out in front and pull up your toes to tighten your thigh muscles. Hold for 5 seconds then slowly lower leg.

Repeat x 10 on Each Leg

Marching on the Spot



Stand with feet hip width apart and hold on to a supportive surface. March on the spot.

3 x 30 seconds

Standing Squat



Stand with feet hip width apart. Squat down so both knees and hips are slightly bent then rise back up. Movement should be slow and controlled.

Repeat x 10

Research

NHS Lothian is committed to supporting clinical research. If you are eligible for any research studies, someone from the research team may contact you with information that you can read. If you do not wish to take part in any research, this will not affect your clinical care in any way.

More Information

Other booklets available in this series include;

- 1** **FIT FOR SURGERY**
- 2** **HAVING A GENERAL ANAESTHETIC**
- 3** **DAY OF SURGERY**
- 5** **PAIN RELIEF AFTER SURGERY**
- 6** **GOING HOME AFTER SURGERY**

This publication includes text taken from the Royal College of Anaesthetists' (RCoA) leaflet '*Fitter, Better, Sooner (2018)*' but the RCoA has not reviewed this as a whole.