



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust

Exercises after Gynaecological Surgery

Issued by the Physiotherapy Department

building a caring future

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www.northumbria.nhs.uk

The purpose of this leaflet is to offer advice and exercises to improve your health and fitness after having gynaecological surgery.

Benefits

The benefits of this advice and these exercises are to prevent post-operative complications, to aid your recovery and to restore muscle tone in your abdominal and pelvic floor muscles.

Risks

The risks of not following the advice and exercises may include muscle weakness and a reduction in the support that they provide.

Alternatives

Unfortunately, there are no easy alternatives to practicing these exercises.

Breathing exercises

Take a deep breath in through your nose, filling your lungs as fully as possible, hold, then breathe out through your mouth. Repeat 3 times, then rest.

- Repeat this again. It will help loosen any sputum, aid circulation and ease wind.
- If you feel a “rattle” in your chest, bend up your knees (or lean forward), support your wound and try a huff (a short, forced breath out). Drawing your tummy in first will help.

Foot and leg exercises

To stimulate the circulation:

- Briskly bend and stretch your ankles
- Move your ankles round in a circle
- Press your knees down into the bed and squeeze your buttocks at the same time – hold, then slowly release.

Repeat each exercise 10 times, at least 3 times a day.

Comfort and posture

- Poor posture can aggravate pain.
- Don't slump; use pillows to support your back.
- Try lying on your side with a pillow between your knees when resting.
- Stand and walk tall with your tummy and buttocks tucked in.

Getting in and out of bed

- Gently draw your tummy in and keep it braced throughout the movement.
- Bend your knees up one at a time.
- Keep the knees together and roll on to your side.
- Push yourself up with your arms allowing your legs to swing down to the floor.
- Reverse this technique to get back into bed.

Pelvic floor exercises

These muscles support the pelvic organs and help control the bladder and bowel. Exercising them regularly will improve the healing process and keep them healthy.

The basic exercise

This can be done in any position.

- Gently squeeze the muscles around the front and back passage as if stopping yourself going to the toilet.
- Hold, then relax slowly. Do not hold your breath or tighten your legs, buttocks or upper abdomen.

Slow contractions

- Squeeze and lift your pelvic floor muscles.
- Hold as long as you can (eventually to a count of 10).
- Slowly release and relax for a few seconds.
- Repeat as many times as you can (up to a maximum of 10).

Fast contractions

- Squeeze and lift the muscles hard and fast.
- Slowly release.
- Repeat as many times as you can (up to a maximum of 10).

Aim for 5 sets of exercise a day.

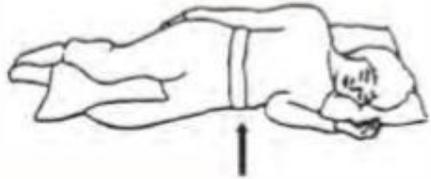
Abdominal exercises

The tummy muscles act like a corset to support the internal organs and reduce strain on the spine during everyday activity, work and sport.

Tummy bracing

You can do this gentle exercise for deep muscles in any position.

- As you breathe out, draw in the lower part of your tummy towards the spine. Keep breathing and hold for up to 10 seconds, then relax.
- Do this exercise regularly.
- Brace before moving and during activities such as lifting, pulling or pushing.



Pelvic tilt

- Pull in tummy, tilt your pelvis and flatten your lower back on to the bed – hold, then release slowly.
- A gentle rocking motion can ease backache.



Knee rocking

- Bend your knees, gently rock them from side to side.
- Gradually increase the movement, but work within comfort.

These exercises can ease backache, wind pain and gently tone the muscles.

Repeat each exercise up to 10 times, 3 or 4 times a day.

Progression of abdominal exercises

After 2 or 3 weeks, when you can happily manage the gentle exercises, you can progress to the following. Never strain or hold your breath.

Tummy tightening with leg lift

- Brace your deep tummy muscles.
- Slowly raise one leg about 10 centimeters.
- Hold for 3 or 4 seconds, then slowly lower, keeping your tummy tight.
- Relax, repeat with the other leg.



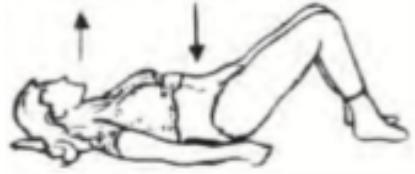
Tummy tightening with leg slide

- Brace your deep tummy muscles.
- Slowly slide one leg straight, keeping your tummy tight.
- Bend your knee up again, then relax.
- Repeat with the other leg.



The head lift

- Brace your deep tummy muscles.
- Lift your head only, hold for a few seconds.
- Slowly lower and rest.



To progress

- Try each exercise 3 times and gradually increase the number up to 10.
- Hold for 3 – 4 seconds and gradually increase the hold up to 10 seconds.

Do the exercises little and often with a balance between rest and exercise.

Advice for going home

- **Rest** in the first 2 weeks – it is normal to feel tired and your body needs time to heal. Get plenty of rest and continue with the gentle exercises.
- **Walk** short distances to begin with, gradually increasing the distance as you feel able.
- **Housework** after 2 weeks progress from light activities (dusting or washing up), gradually doing more until you are managing all your usual household activities by 6 weeks.

DO NOT

- **Lift** or push anything heavy (over 3.5kg or 8lbs) until your tissues have had time to heal.
- **Strain** when going to the toilet.
- **Drive**, until you feel comfortable (4 – 6 weeks).

Back to work or sport

Within 6 – 12 weeks, depending on the surgery, your rate of recovery and the level of activity involved.

Sexual intercourse

To ensure there is good healing, you may want to wait for 6 weeks. A lubricant may reduce any initial discomfort.

Diet

Eat healthily to keep your weight controlled and to avoid constipation.

Contact Numbers

The Northumbria Specialist Emergency Care Hospital

Northumbria Way

Cramlington

NE23 6NZ

Pregnancy assessment unit: 0191 607 2815

Birthing centre: 0191 607 2318

Ward 16: 0191 607 2016

Berwick Midwifery Led Unit

High Green

Berwick-upon-Tweed

TD15 1LT

01289 356 622

Hexham Midwifery Led Unit

Corbridge Road

Hexham

NE46 1QJ

01434 655 352

Hillcrest Midwifery Led Unit

Infirmery Drive

Alnwick

NE66 2NS

01665 626 732

Alternative Formats

If you would like a copy of this information in large print, another language, audio tape or other format please call the Contact Centre on 03 44 811 8118.

Other sources of information

NHS 111

NHS Choices

www.nhs.uk/pages/homepage.aspx

NICE (National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence)

www.nice.org.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Freephone: 0800 032 0202

Text: 07815 500015

Email: northoftynepals@nhct.nhs.uk

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

General Enquiries 03 44 811 8111

www.northumbria.nhs.uk

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