

## Scar massage

Once your wounds have healed you can start to apply a plain moisturising cream to your scars, massaging the cream in firmly. If you are concerned about your scarring, ask your physiotherapist or a nurse in clinic for advice.

The exercises in this leaflet should help you to regain the movement and function. Some people find it easier than others and you may require a course of physiotherapy to help you.

If you are struggling with any of the exercises or have any concerns, then please ring **0151 430 1237** or speak to a physiotherapist when you come back to clinic and they can refer you for physiotherapy as required.

## Name of Therapist

Whiston Hospital  
Warrington Road,  
Prescot, Merseyside, L35 5DR  
Telephone: 0151 426 1600

St Helens Hospital  
Marshall Cross Road,  
St Helens, Merseyside, WA9 3DA  
Telephone: 01744 26633

# Abdominal Wall Reconstruction

This leaflet can be made available  
in alternative languages / formats on request.

如有需要，本传单可提供其他语言/版式  
此單張的其他語言/格式版本可按要求提供

Na żądanie ta ulotka może zostać udostępniona  
w innych językach/formatach.

## Information

The first day after your operation you may not be very mobile; your therapist may teach you **deep breathing exercises** (page 2) which are important to help overcome the effects of the anaesthetic.

- It is also important to cough if you need to, coughing will not damage your wound. To support your wound draw your knees towards you and support your wound with a pillow or towel.
- You should perform **circulatory exercises** by paddling your feet up and down (bend and straighten your ankles briskly) for 30 seconds **every hour**.
- When in bed, keep a pillow or two under your knees to avoid stretching your wound. The pillows can be removed after a few days when it feels comfortable.
- **Getting out of bed** may be a challenge and you will need assistance at least for the first time. Wait for a member of staff to advise you when it is safe to do so and to help you. When getting out of bed:
  1. Keep your knees bent and roll them to the side you intend to get out.
  2. At the same time reach across with your arms to the same side to avoid twisting your tummy.
- Once you are lying on your side, slowly drop your legs off the bed and push up on the mattress with your hands.
- When you are **walking** you will be advised to stoop slightly to avoid overstretching your tummy. Try to gradually straighten up as you feel comfortable to minimise low back pain. Your therapist may take you to practice the **stairs** before you go home.

## After discharge

If you have a lycra tummy support ("binder") from the ward, wear this day and night for **4 to 6 weeks** after your operation unless advised otherwise. It helps to control the swelling that is a normal result of your surgery.

Continue to follow the advice and exercises provided by your ward therapist.

**If you are expecting an Outpatient appointment but do not receive one please contact your Consultants secretary.**

The following is a guide to returning to your normal activities. Remember that we are all individuals and will recover at different rates. The professionals that see you after your operation will be able to give you further advice.

### First 4 weeks after your operation

- Lift nothing heavier than a 1/2 filled kettle. Avoid driving, housework and your job. Making light snacks and slowly building up your walking distance is fine.

### 4 to 6 weeks after your operation

- Return to driving only if you can work the controls safely and perform an emergency stop. Light housework only.

### 6 to 8 weeks

- Gentle increase in core stability, no sit ups.

### 8 to 12 weeks if you have had your tummy muscles tightened

- Return to light work duties, start gentle and slowly increase the loads you are lifting.

### 12 to 16 weeks

- Return to light work if able, continue rehab.

### 16 weeks

- Return to normal work, sports and domestic activities. Can commence sit ups if no issues.

## Progressing your abdominal exercises after 2 weeks

Lying on back, knees bent, spine in neutral position, pull up your pelvic floor and contract your deep tummy muscle, (Transversus Abdominus) as shown on page 3 of this booklet.

Whilst holding this contraction, repetitions of the following three exercises should be done without losing control of the pelvis and lower back.

### Slowly:

1. Drop one knee to the side and return



2. Slide one heel out until your leg is straight and return



Ensure the exercise are performed with one leg then the other.  
Repeat **5 times each leg**.

## Post Operative Advice

### Breathing Exercises

Your operation was performed under general anaesthetic. Many people find they bring up phlegm (mucus) for a day or two after a general anaesthetic. This is normal.

However, a general anaesthetic puts you at a higher risk of developing a chest infection.

It is important that you perform the breathing exercises regularly, as shown in this leaflet, once you have woken from your anaesthetic. Perform them as a cycle **every hour** to open your airways more and help to keep your chest clear of phlegm (mucus).

### 1. Deep Breathing Exercises

Take a deep breath in through your nose and fill your lungs as much as possible. Hold for a couple of seconds and sigh the air out through your mouth. Repeat **3 to 4 times then...**

### 2. Relaxed Breathing

Gently rest your hand on your tummy. Take a gentle breath in through your nose. Your tummy should rise. Sigh the air out of your mouth. Your tummy should fall. Repeat **3 to 4 times then...**

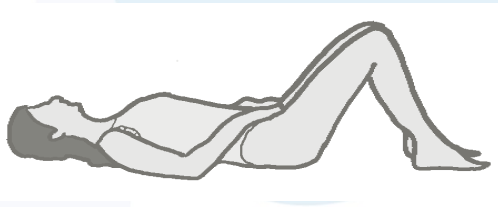
### 3. Supported Huffing/Coughing

Bend your knees and hold a towel or a pillow firmly over your tummy to support your wound. Open your mouth widely and force the air out as if you were steaming up a mirror. This helps to bring any phlegm (mucus) to the back of your throat. You may then need to cough to clear it whilst still supporting your wound. Repeat **3 times**.

## Abdominal Exercises

Gentle squeezing of the deep tummy muscle, (Transversus Abdominus) is taught while you are in hospital to start improving muscle tone.

- Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat to the mattress.
- Keep your breathing relaxed.
- Imagine you need to go to the toilet but have to hold it in. You should feel a tightening in your tummy but not your buttocks or thighs. Keep your breathing relaxed.
- Sometimes it can help to imagine you are gently pulling in your lower tummy in order to zip up a pair of jeans.
- Hold this tension in your lower tummy for up to 10 seconds and repeat up to **10 times, 4 times a day**. It can be hard to grasp at first and your therapist will help you.



## Exercises for your back

### 1. Knee Rolling

Lie on your back with your knees bent and together and your feet on the bed.

Keep your shoulders on the bed. Let your knees gently and slowly roll from one side to the other, keeping the knees together. Stop when you feel a gentle pull. Repeat **10 times, 3 to 4 times daily**.



### 2. Pelvic Tilting

Lie on your back with your knees bent and your feet flat on the bed. Tighten your lower tummy muscles and tilt your bottom upwards slightly whilst pushing your lower back into the bed. Repeat **3 times, 3 to 4 times daily**.

