

Prevention of post-operative respiratory complications

Preventing post-operative chest infections

You have been given this leaflet, as you have been identified to be a particular risk of a post-operative chest infection. In order to try to reduce this risk, you have been provided with this programme of activities to work on before and after surgery. You may be referred to our Respiratory physiotherapy team if you need further help or have very severe lung disease.

ARISCAT SCORE	Percentage risk

What to do before surgery?

1. Breathing Exercises

Pain and tiredness post operatively can increase the risk of sputum building up in the lungs leading to infection and airway collapse. This risk is increased if you have an underlying lung condition. It is important to practice your breathing exercises before your operation so that you are familiar with how to use them after the operation.



Breathing Control - relaxed breathing

- Rest your hand lightly on your stomach.
- Breathe in and out quietly and gently through your nose if you can.
- As you breathe in your stomach should rise.

Deep breaths –

- Deep breaths help to get air behind the sputum in your airways.
- Take a long slow deep breath in through your nose.
- Breathe out gently through your mouth.
- Try to breath right down to the bottom of your lungs, expanding your ribcage.

Huff –

- A huff is similar to a cough, but you aim to keep you mouth and throat open.
- Imagine you are trying to steam up a mirror.
- Take a breath in and then exhale the air out forcefully through an open mouth.
- If you wheeze as you exhale you are huffing too hard.

2. Smoking

If you smoke it is important that you try to stop as soon as possible before your surgery. Smoking may lead to breathing difficulties following surgery, and it will slow down the healing process of any wounds.

3. Weight Loss

Excess weight increases the risk of poor health and being overweight leads to more complications of surgery and anaesthesia, with an increased risk of having breathing problems during or after the surgery. In most circumstances complications can be avoided, by losing weight (even a little) before your surgery.

4. Exercise

You are advised to exercise daily, getting out of breath for at least 10-30 minutes as advised by our team. Please agree with your nurse the type of exercise you will do eg: walking or cycling. Please aim your exercise to be 'somewhat hard' on the breathing scale on a daily basis.

How to describe your exertion
No exertion at all – no aches, fatigue, or breathlessness
Extremely light
Very light – e.g. Taking a short walk at your own pace
Light
SOMEWHAT HARD – still able to hold a conversation but laboured breathing
Hard/heavy – it is hard and tiring, but continuing isn't terribly difficult
Very Hard – very strenuous, you really have to push yourself and you are very tired
Extremely Hard
Maximal exertion

Please make sure any chest infections are resolved before surgery, you take your medications as required, and your lung condition is as good as it can be. Please make sure you do not have a chest infection on the day of surgery as you will likely to be cancelled. Please call us for advice if you develop an infection.

After Surgery

1. Mobilisation

It is best to get up and about as soon as you can. Not moving around may actually make your recovery time longer. We will encourage you to:

- Get out of bed and into the chair on the day of surgery
- Walking around the ward on Day 1

The nursing staff on the ward will encourage and assist you to mobilise after surgery, if additional support is required they can refer you to the physiotherapy team.

2. Mouth Hygiene

- Good mouth care reduces risk of lung complications after surgery
- Brush your teeth twice a day for 2 minutes
- Use dental floss
- Consider using a mouth wash twice a day

3. Breathing Exercises

- Do your breathing exercises you have been given twice a day or more. Huffing, deep breathing and using the Bubble PEP (if you have been given one).

If you need any further advice, please phone your Enhanced Recovery Nurse on the contact number you have been given. Do your very best to get yourself into the best shape possible before your operation. It really does make a difference.

Please remember that this leaflet is intended as general information only. We aim to make the information as up to date and accurate as possible, but please note that it is subject to change. Please therefore always check specific advice on any concerns you may have with your doctor.

How can I help reduce healthcare associated infections?

Infection prevention & control is important to the well-being of our patients and for that reason we have infection prevention & control procedures in place. Keeping your hands clean is an effective way of preventing the spread of infections. Please follow our infection prevention and control guidelines when visiting our healthcare sites. Further information is available on our website.

Patient Advice Sheet

If you would like a copy of this information on audiotape, in large print or translated, please call the Patient Advice Liaison Service on 01296 831120 or email bht.pals@nhs.net