

Enhanced Recovery After Surgery (ERAS) for Colorectal Patients

Your first few days at home

Once you are home you may find that walking around your home and up and downstairs tires you more easily, but this is normal and will ease with time. So we recommend that you follow the same routine that you had on the ward.

Walking

We recommend walking as the best way to keep up your fitness. Aim to potter around the house every day and, throughout the day. Then, weather permitting, start to go outside for walks when you feel up to it.

Getting in and out of bed

To get out of bed for the first six weeks after your operation we recommend 'log rolling' as it reduces stress and pain over your abdominal wound. The 'log rolling' technique involves keeping your knees bent, then rolling onto your side, allowing your legs and feet to drop over the edge of the bed. Using your arms and hands push yourself up into a sitting position on the bed. Reverse the procedure to get back into the bed.

Discomfort

Some discomfort around the wound is normal after surgery. Sleeping with a pillow under your knees may help to reduce pain when you are lying in bed by reducing the stretch to your wound.

Taking your painkillers regularly as prescribed by your team or healthcare professionals will help to ease any pain and allow you to be more mobile, sleep and also continue with your deep breathing exercises.

Lifting

No lifting is recommended for the first six weeks following surgery. This allows your body time to heal. Do not lift anything heavier than a full 3 pint kettle (3-4 kgs or 6-8lbs). If the activity makes you hold your breath or grunt due to the effort required, then please refrain from that activity.

Household tasks and gardening

Take things at your own pace. Concentrate on becoming more active but at the pace your body allows you to.

Physical activity

Returning to fitness after your operation may take at least 12 weeks.

For your first four weeks at home you can do light activities such as washing up, light dusting and easy household jobs.

After four to six weeks you can begin to include vacuuming, ironing and cooking.

After six weeks you will have an outpatient review where you will be told whether you can resume normal activities which may include gardening.

After eight weeks at home more strenuous activities such as golf, jogging, aerobics and cycling and most other sports can be started but within your physical limits. If in doubt, please check with your Consultant/ERAS physiotherapist.

Sport and active hobbies

If you have a stoma you will need to wear a stoma support belt before resuming any sport, please discuss this with your stoma nurse.

- 24 hours post-operatively - walking on the flat.
- **After four weeks at home** - low impact exercises are OK. For example hill walking.

For further support and advice on physical activity, please contact the ERAS Physiotherapist on 01606 544513.

Driving

Do not drive for five to six weeks after your surgery. You must ensure that you are able to make an emergency stop safely and control your car safely at all times. Please check with your car insurer for any exclusion clauses related to major surgery. Check with your GP if you are in doubt. You can also contact the DVLA for advice on www.dvla.gov.uk or call 0870 600 0301.

Posture, wound healing and massage

After your operation you should maintain a good posture by not allowing yourself to stoop when you are stood or when walking.

Once your wound has healed, you can stretch your abdomen by lying flat on your back and as your discomfort reduces lying on your tummy. This may not be possible if you have a stoma. Make sure your stoma bag is empty before trying this.

Massaging the wounds with moisturiser will help to reduce the risk of tight scar formation. Use the palm of your hand to massage the top layer of skin in circular motions.

Returning to work

Your GP will be able to give you advice about going back to work advise you on when to return to work.

Sexual intercourse

If you have had any form of anal surgery, please discuss this with your Consultant at your outpatient review appointment. This review usually takes place about four to six weeks after your operation.

This information is available in audio, Braille, large print and other languages. To request a copy, please telephone 01606 544513.