

# Hysterectomy and Vaginal Repair Advice and Exercises

## After the operation

### Getting comfortable

**Rest** is essential. You may find it comfortable to rest in this position.



When sitting, place a small pillow in your lower back for added comfort. When standing, stand up tall as good posture is essential, and it will also support your back.

### Getting out of bed

Bend your knees and roll on to your side, try to move both your upper and lower body at the same time to avoid twisting. Use your arms to push yourself up into a sitting position, allowing your legs to swing down at the same time. You can reverse this to get into bed.



## Circulation

Start this exercise immediately to ensure good circulation in your legs. Briskly circle or bend and stretch at the ankle 30 times every hour and before you get out of bed. Continue with this exercise until you are up and about.

## Breathing Exercises

**Deep breathing** – after your surgery, and while you are less active, it is important to use your lungs well.

- Take a deep breath in through your nose.
- Hold for 2 seconds.
- Sigh out slowly through your mouth.

Repeat this exercise three times every hour until you are up and about more.

**Coughing** – This may be uncomfortable but your stitches will not come undone! If you need to cough, support yourself using the following examples. After abdominal surgery, sit forwards or bend your knees up and support your wound with your hands or a pillow. After vaginal surgery, give support between your legs by applying pressure over your pad.



## Early Exercises

Little and often is important - start slowly and gradually build up. Stop if you feel tired or get more discomfort than usual.

Speak to your Women's health Physiotherapist if you are unsure about exercising.

Begin with the following exercises within the first few days of your surgery. These exercises will improve your abdominal and pelvic floor muscle tone which will improve your core stability. They can also help relieve backache and trapped wind, which are very common after a hysterectomy.

Try to do the following exercises 3 – 4 times a day.

## Deep Abdominal Exercise

You can do this exercise in lying (on your back or side) or in sitting. Firstly let your tummy sag and breathe gently. As you breathe out, gently draw in the lower part of your stomach. Hold for a few seconds and let go.

Do not move your back at any time and remember to breathe. Repeat 4 – 5 times with a few seconds rest in-between. Aim to build up to 10 seconds hold, repeat x 10.



## Knee Rolling

Lie on your back with your knees together and both legs bent. Slowly roll your knees from side to side, keeping your upper trunk still. Only move as far as you feel is comfortable. Repeat 10 times to each side.

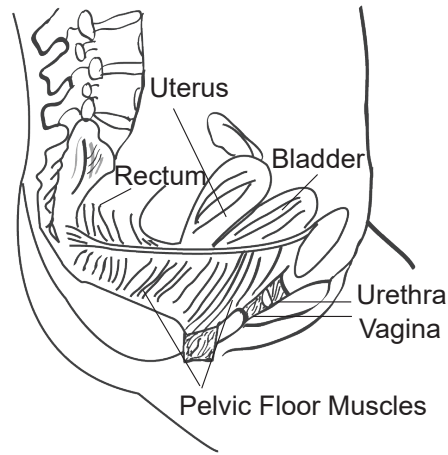


## Pelvic Tilting

Lie on your back with both legs bent up and draw in the lower tummy muscles. Gently squeeze your pelvic floor and buttocks, tilt your pelvis up and flatten your back to the bed. Hold this for a maximum of 10 seconds then release. Repeat up to 10 times.



## Pelvic Floor Exercises



Looking after your pelvic floor muscles is essential – following your gynaecology surgery and throughout life. Initially, exercising them could reduce discomfort and swelling. Longer term, toning up the muscles may prevent leakage from your bladder or bowel. It can also help safeguard against prolapse and may improve your sex life.

### The Basic Pelvic Floor Exercise

Imagine that you are trying to stop yourself from passing wind and at the same time trying to stop your flow of urine. The feeling is one of “squeeze and lift”, closing and drawing-up the back and front passages. This is called a pelvic floor contraction.

**Remember:** You should start gently and stop if it hurts. Do not pull your stomach in excessively or squeeze your legs together, tighten your buttocks or hold your breath.

### The Pelvic Floor Exercise Programme

Now that you can do the basic exercise you can build up the endurance of the muscles so that will work harder and longer. Firstly, you need to determine your ‘starting block’.

Tighten your pelvic floor muscles as previously described and hold for as long as you can (maximum = 10 seconds).

#### How many seconds can you hold for?

Relax the contraction and rest for 5 – 10 seconds.

Then repeat the ‘tighten, hold and relax’ movement as many times as you can (maximum = 10)

#### How many times can you repeat this?

This is your ‘starting block’.

Now perform the basic exercise but squeeze and lift more firmly, and let go straight away.

This is called a quick contraction and will help your muscles react quickly when you cough, sneeze or lift, etc.

#### How many quick contractions can you do?

Aim to increase this to a maximum of 10.

You should try to repeat your starting block and quick contractions at least 3 times a day. Your starting block will change as the muscles get stronger; so re-check this every few weeks.

## Progressing at home

### Rest / Pacing

Rest is an important part of your recovery, be sure to pace yourself. Take frequent rests in between your activities and listen to your body.

### Travelling / Driving

If you have had abdominal surgery, then you may find it more comfortable to put a pillow, blanket, etc between your wound and the seatbelt.

Getting back to driving is usually between 4 – 6 weeks but this will depend on your insurance cover and your ability to perform an emergency stop, your ability to twist to manoeuvre and your ability to fully concentrate.

### Housework / Lifting

For the first 6 weeks you should be able to lift light loads such as a bag of sugar (1.1kg), which will enable you to make a hot drink (only filling kettle with 1 – 2 cups of water) and snacks/ light meals.

From 6 - 12 weeks you can gradually start dusting, small amounts of ironing, light laundry, etc. Whenever you lift, remember to bend your knees, hollow your abdomen and draw up your pelvic floor muscles. At this stage you should be able to lift the equivalent of 3 bags of sugar (3.3kg). It is advisable to leave heavy housework e.g. vacuuming for longer. You can do a lot of household jobs in sitting, i.e. ironing, preparing meals.

From 12 weeks onwards, you can gradually build up to your normal activities / routine.

## General Exercise

**Walking** – Start with 5 -10 minutes of gentle walking everyday and gradually increase your pace and time to about 30 – 45 minutes by 6 weeks after your operation.

**Swimming** – You can go swimming from 6 weeks of your operation provided that your outer abdominal wound as healed or your vaginal bleeding / discharge has stopped. Start slowly and gradually increase your speed and distance.

**High impact exercise** – Aerobics, weight training and running should be left until **at least 12 weeks** after your operation. Ease in slowly and gradually increase intensity and effort levels.

If you suffer from *recurrent pelvic organ prolapse* you should avoid repeated heavy lifting as this is a risk factor for future recurrence. It is recommended that you do not lift objects heavier than 5kg.

If you enjoy a specific sport or exercise and are unsure when to re-start this, speak with your consultant or GP, and they can refer you to the Women's Health Physiotherapy Service for advice.

## Back to Work

This will vary depending on the nature of your job and the number of hours that you work. Speak to your Doctor or Women's Health Physiotherapist for more specific advice.

## Sexual Intercourse

If you feel ready, you can have sex from 6 weeks after your operation. Use of extra lubrication may be helpful. You may feel some discomfort initially, but this should pass. It can take 12 weeks for internal stitches to dissolve. If you experience any pain, seek advice from your doctor.

## Web Address

<http://www.cht.nhs.uk/services/clinical-services/physiotherapy-outpatients/patient-careinformation/>

## QR Code



**If you have any comments about this leaflet or the service you have received you can contact :**

Physiotherapy Department  
Huddersfield Royal Infirmary  
Telephone No: 01484 342434

MSK Physiotherapy Admin Office  
Telephone No: 01484 905380

[www.cht.nhs.uk](http://www.cht.nhs.uk)

**If you would like this information in another format or language contact the above.**

Potřebujete-li tyto informace v jiném formátu nebo jazyce, obraťte se prosím na výše uvedené oddělení

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"إذا احتجت الحصول على هذه المعلومة بشكل مغاير أو مترجمة إلى لغة مختلفة فيرجى منك الاتصال بالقسم المذكور أعلاه"