

INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

Physiotherapy service

Abdominal exercises before DIEP and TRAM breast reconstruction surgery

This leaflet aims to explain exercises you can do to help prepare you for your DIEP (deep inferior epigastric perforator) or TRAM (transverse rectus abdominis muscle) breast reconstruction surgery.

Why should I do abdominal exercises before breast reconstruction surgery?

The aim of these exercises is to improve the strength of, and blood supply to, muscles which may be affected by your surgery. Building up your muscles before surgery can aid your recovery and return to activities.

When should I start doing them?

To benefit from the exercises you need to start them **at least two months** before your surgery.

How often should I do them and how many?

Start the exercises gradually. Aim to build up to doing ten of each exercise every day. You may increase the number as you become stronger. Remember to pace yourself and listen to your body.

When should I not do the exercises?

This leaflet contains general advice on exercises, so they may not all be suitable for you.

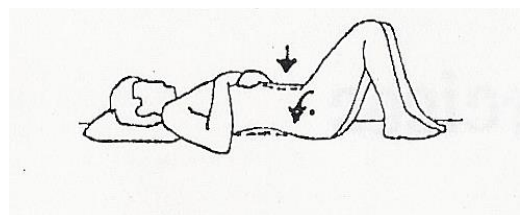
Stop any of the exercises which cause pain or aggravate any other conditions you may have, such as back or neck problems.

If you have any questions please telephone us on 01623 672384, extension 3221.

Should I continue the exercises after my surgery?

No. Speak to your physiotherapist about what exercises you should do following your surgery.

Exercise 1 - pelvic tilting



- Lie on your back, knees bent and feet on the floor/bed.

- Flatten your back into the floor; pull your tummy button down towards your spine, letting your bottom rise slightly as you do so. Tighten your pelvic floor.
- Hold for up to a count of five - keep breathing. Relax then repeat.

Exercise 2 - abdominal hollowing

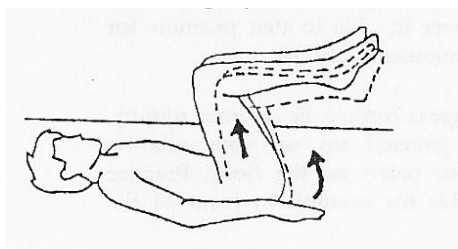


- Lie on your back, knees bent and feet on the floor/bed.
- Flatten your back comfortably on the floor – pull your tummy button down towards your back, hollowing out your lower tummy area.
- Tighten your pelvic floor.
- Your pelvis/bottom should not move and your breathing should stay relaxed. Hold for up to a count of five. Relax then repeat.

Tip

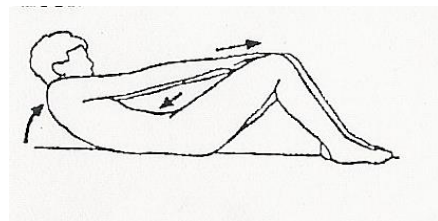
You can practise abdominal hollowing in any position or situation such as in the car at traffic lights, when brushing your teeth or before you lift anything. This will also help strengthen your back.

Exercise 3 - lower abdominal exercises



- Lie on your back with your hips and knees bent at a right angle and your feet in the air.
- Flatten your back into the bed by pulling your tummy button down towards your back and letting your bottom rise slightly.
- Tighten your pelvic floor.
- Hold for up to a count of five, keep breathing. Relax then repeat.

Exercise 4 - upper abdominal exercises



- Lie on your back, knees bent and feet on the floor/bed.
- Place your hands on the front of your thighs.
- Breathe in and, as you breathe out, pull your tummy button towards your spine and slide your hands up your thighs, gently curling your head and shoulder blades off the floor. Tighten your pelvic floor.
- Hold the position for up to a count of five, and then slowly lower your head and shoulders back to the floor. Relax then repeat.

Exercise 5:

- Start as in exercise 4, but this time stretch both hands to the outside of your left knee.
- Slowly lower yourself back to the floor, relax, and then repeat to the outside of your right knee.

Tip

If you wish to progress with exercises 4 and 5, repeat the exercise with your fingers touching your ears and your elbows out to the side. Don't pull on your neck.

Individual advice

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Contact details

Breast care physiotherapist
Clinic 10
King's Mill Hospital
Telephone: 01623 672384, extension 3221

Useful information

Breast Cancer Care

Helpline: 0808 8006000
www.breastcancercare.org.uk

Macmillan Cancer Support

Helpline: 0808 8080000
www.macmillan.org.uk

Further sources of information

NHS Choices: www.nhs.uk/conditions
Our website: www.sfh-tr.nhs.uk

Patient Experience Team (PET)

PET is available to help with any of your compliments, concerns or complaints, and will ensure a prompt and efficient service.

King's Mill Hospital: 01623 672222

Newark Hospital: 01636 685692

Email: sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net

If you would like this information in an alternative format, for example large print or easy read, or if you need help with communicating with us, for example because you use British Sign Language, please let us know. You can call the Patient Experience Team on 01623 672222 or email sfh-tr.PET@nhs.net.

This document is intended for information purposes only and should not replace advice that your relevant health professional would give you.

External websites may be referred to in specific cases. Any external websites are provided for your information and convenience. We cannot accept responsibility for the information found on them.

If you require a full list of references for this leaflet, please email sfh-tr.patientinformation@nhs.net or telephone 01623 622515, extension 6927.

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