



PHYSIOTHERAPY DEPARTMENT
BON SECOURS HOSPITAL
College Road, Cork

Physiotherapy advice and exercises after major gynaecological surgery



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All patients having major gynaecological surgery should attend the physiotherapy advice class. Please ring 021 4801630 to book your place.

After your operation

After surgery it is important to practice breathing and circulation exercises.

Breathing exercises

Take a slow deep breath in through your nose.

Hold for three seconds.

Then breathe out slowly.

Repeat this five times every hour that you are awake.

Circulation exercises



Move your ankles up and down quickly
20-30 times every hour while awake.

Coughing

For comfort while coughing:

- After abdominal surgery use a towel or pillow to support your wound.
- After vaginal surgery you can apply gentle pressure between your legs with a towel or sanitary pad.



Getting in and out of bed following gynaecological surgery

- Bend both knees, roll over onto your side.
- Keeping your knees together, push yourself up into a sitting position with your arms. Allow your legs to swing to the floor.
- Stand up slowly.
- When getting back into bed sit close to the pillows and reverse the above process.

This technique prevents you overusing the tummy muscles and decreases pressure on the pelvic floor.



Tips for reducing heavy loads:

Carry smaller weights but make more journeys (e.g. bringing shopping in from the car or clothes to the line)

Housework

Begin light tasks as comfortable.

Avoid prolonged standing (e.g. iron in small quantities, sit to prepare meals).

(Also see the previous section on 'Lifting')

Return to work

This depends on the nature of your work and your ability to concentrate.

Generally at least 6 weeks, or more if your work involves lifting/pushing/pulling

Sexual intercourse

Avoid for 6 weeks unless otherwise directed by your consultant.

Rest

Depending on the nature of your operation it is natural to feel tired at times for up to 6 weeks. Rest is an important part of recovery and you may need to lie down a couple of times a day for a few weeks.

Physiotherapy

If you require further advice on pelvic floor exercises or advice on the safe return to general exercise and activities contact our physiotherapy department. We provide individual appointments with a women's health physiotherapist.

Bon Secours physiotherapy department 021-4801630

Returning to activities

Return to various activities will vary depending on your operation, the reason you had your operation and your consultant. Individual advice given by your women's health physiotherapist/gynaecologist should be followed. The following are guidelines:-

Driving

Generally 3-6 weeks after your operation. This will depend on a number of factors:

- Can you concentrate?
- Can you do an emergency stop?
- Is it comfortable to wear a seat belt?

Walking

Aim to walk most days of the week. Gradually increase your pace and time.

Swimming

Return after your 6 week check up.

Aerobic or high impact exercise

Should not be done for 6-12 weeks.

Avoid strong abdominal exercises (e.g. sit-ups, pilates, crunches) until you have spoken to your consultant or physiotherapist.

Lifting

Avoid heavy lifting for 6 to 12 weeks.

You need to speak to your consultant, as sometimes it may not be advisable to return to heavy lifting at all.

Correct Technique: When lifting remember to:

- Bend your knees.
- Keep your back straight.
- Pull in your tummy and pelvic floor.
- Breathe out as you lift
- Keep the load close to your body.
- Bend your knees.
- Keep your back straight.



Knee rolling

Knee rolling can be helpful in relieving wind or backache.



Bend up both knees.

Gently roll both knees a few inches to one side.

Repeat to other side slowly in a "Tic Toc" motion.

Pelvic tilting

This exercise is helpful for your lower tummy muscles.



Lie on your back with your knees bent. Keep your breathing relaxed during the exercise.

As you breathe out, gently draw in your lower tummy, and flatten your lower back into the bed.

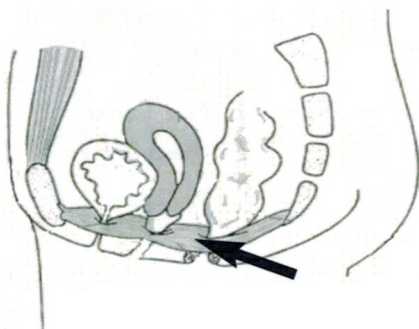
Hold for a few seconds breathing normally.

Slowly release.

Repeat 10 times, 2-3 times per day.

To progress, increase the hold time up to 10 seconds.

Pelvic floor exercises



Pelvic floor muscles support bladder, uterus & rectum

The **pelvic floor muscles** are situated at the base (floor) of the pelvis. They help to support the pelvic organs.

It is important to exercise these muscles as they help maintain bladder and bowel control. The correct exercise technique is very important.

If you have an overactive or painful pelvic floor, do not do pelvic floor exercises until you see your women's health physiotherapist. (note: overactive pelvic floor is different to an overactive bladder).

Pelvic floor exercise

- Sit or lie in a good posture.
- Breathe in, expanding your tummy.
- As you breathe out, pull up your pelvic floor by imagining you are trying to stop the flow of urine.
- This should be a 'squeeze and lift' movement.
- Hold for a few seconds while breathing normally.
- Slowly release and relax for 5-10 seconds.
- When doing this exercise, do not squeeze your buttocks or hold your breath. It is important to fully relax the pelvic floor muscles after each exercise.
- After surgery, wait until your catheter is removed and then continue with your pelvic floor exercises.

Start these exercises **gently** and **gradually** increase until you can do 5-10 repetitions in a row.

Do this 3-5 times a day **for the rest of your life**.

This exercise can be done in any position as well as during everyday activities. This can take a few weeks to achieve.

Try to do this exercise when coughing, sneezing or lifting.

It's an easy exercise that can be done anywhere.

If you have difficulty with the exercises or you think the muscles are not recovering contact your women's health physiotherapist.

Good posture

Good posture is important for your pelvic floor as well as your back.

After surgery, it's important to sit, stand and walk tall



Good posture



Poor sitting posture



Correct sitting posture

Correct toileting position for bowel motion

- Don't put off the urge to open your bowels
- On the toilet, your knees should be higher than your hips. You may need to put your feet on a step.
- Relax forwards, with your elbows resting on your knees.
- Avoid straining to open your bowels. If you need to push a little make sure your tummy stays relaxed.

