

## Physiotherapy and Occupational Therapy

### Advice for patients following back surgery

#### General Posture

Always try to maintain an upright posture, with tummy muscles engaged and the back kept straight. Imagine that you are being lifted up by the top of your head. This applies to standing and walking.

Avoid lifting anything heavy for the first few weeks. Take general precautions when lifting and bend your knees and keep the object close to the body.

#### Wound

Your wound will be stitched under the skin with dissolvable stitches. The wound will be closed with glue. It is important that you do not tamper with the wound. You are allowed to shower but do not soak the wound. Be careful not to disrupt the wound sealant.

#### Pain

Following surgery it is possible that you will still experience your pre op symptoms which may have included pain, numbness or weakness in your back and leg. The surgical site will be sore and stiff. It is important that you manage your pain through taking prescribed painkillers at regular intervals. Managing your pain will enable you to continue to keep mobile and aid in your recovery.

Please inform the ward staff if you feel the pain is preventing you from moving, as medications can be altered to suit your needs.

#### Mobility

It is important to mobilise and complete your Physiotherapy exercises regularly following your operation. Short walks are advised initially to help reduce stiffness and work on strengthening your muscles. You may feel some slight discomfort or aching after your walk / exercises; however, this is a normal feeling to experience and you are not harming yourself. You should not require walking aids.

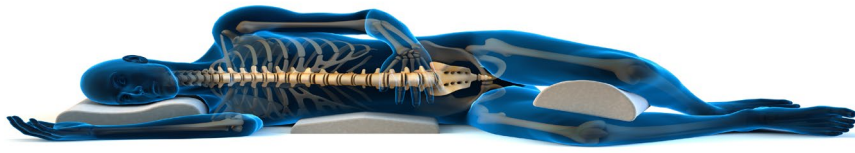
It is important to continue to manage your levels of discomfort through taking pain relief to enable you to complete your walking and physiotherapy exercises.

#### Positioning

You are allowed to lie on your back or side in bed as comfort allows. Avoid lying on your front initially as this will be uncomfortable. Please see images below for examples of correct positioning in bed.

It is important to change position regularly and avoid prolonged periods of rest to prevent stiffness and muscle weakness. Try to alternate between lying and sitting positions throughout the day.

Take care when moving from the bed. The Physiotherapist on the ward will teach you the correct way to transition from lying to sitting on the edge of the bed. Initially it may be easier to sleep on a standard height bed and avoid low furniture.



### **Sitting**

We advise you to avoid sitting for prolonged periods of time. You should aim to stand up and mobilise every 20 minutes following your surgery. Initially it may be quite difficult to stand from low furniture; therefore, we advise you to sit in a higher chair that has arms. You may find it comfortable to place a pillow in the small of your back when sitting in the chair.

### **Personal Care - Washing**

1. Showering puts less strain on the spine than a bath. If your shower is over the bath, lift a leg backwards to get in (this results in less spinal flexion). Always use a non-slip bath mat.
2. Using long handled equipment to wash may assist.

### **Dressing**

1. Where possible lie flat on your back to put lower garments on, including socks.
2. A long handled shoehorn will help when putting on shoes and taking them, and your socks, off

### **Kitchen activities**

1. Ovens and low cupboards – bend at the knees or kneel down.
2. For heavy items in low ovens and cupboards consider using a stool. Put items on to the stool before transferring to the oven.
3. Fill saucepans and kettles with water using a plastic measuring jug to avoid having to lift a full saucepan or kettle.

### **Return to work/hobbies/sport**

Advice about returning to work will be individual to each patient. Please discuss with your surgeon.

It is possible to start water based activities when the wound is fully healed and you are advised to start with straight leg swimming and walking in water. Please discuss with the physiotherapist when you can resume your specific activities.

### **Driving**

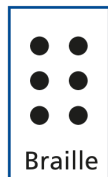
You should avoid driving for approximately 4 weeks following your operation; however, you are able to be a passenger for short journeys. You are advised to check with your insurance company and be fully comfortable before starting to drive again.

## Physiotherapy follow up

You will have a physiotherapy appointment for 3-4 weeks after your surgery at Heatherwood or Wexham Park hospital.

**For a translation of this leaflet or for accessing this information in another format:**

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Please contact (PALS) the Patient Advice and Liaison Service on:

**Frimley Park Hospital**

Telephone: 0300 613 6530

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<p><b>Hospital switchboard:</b> 0300 614 5000</p>		<p><b>Website:</b> <a href="http://www.fhft.nhs.uk">www.fhft.nhs.uk</a></p>

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### Legal Notice

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. Please therefore always check specific advice or any concerns you may have with your doctor.

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