



After your operation

Introduction

This leaflet contains some useful post-operative information for you and your family or carers to read. This information may not answer all the questions you have, and if this is the case we encourage you to speak to a member of staff or use the useful numbers section.

Nutrition

It is important that you begin eating and drinking again as soon as possible after surgery to aid in your healing and recovery. If you have any dietary concerns, or specific dietary needs please speak to a member of staff on admission, so that this can be catered for post operatively. If you have any concerns regarding nutrition and hydration please speak to nursing staff or medical staff. A referral can be made to the dietician if needed. Nutrition is an important component after surgery, as it is critical to the healing process. A good nutritional intake helps you to recover more quickly, and reduces the risk of complications.

You need to increase the amount of protein you consume in the weeks before as well as the weeks following surgery. By increasing your protein intake, it will help your body heal itself more quickly and effectively. Protein is included in foods such as chicken, fish, and eggs. (Try to avoid fried greasy foods). If you are a vegetarian make sure you are meeting your protein needs.

Incorporate dark green leafy vegetables into your meals before and after surgery, such as, cabbage, spinach, broccoli, and asparagus. These contain vitamins and minerals which taken in conjunction with protein and water, will boost your healing rate and will aid in your recovery. It may also be useful to increase your consumption of dietary fibre to prevent constipation.

Wound healing

The National Institute for Clinical Excellence (NICE) advises that patients may shower safely 48 hours after surgery. Low adherent dressings or semi-permeable film dressings are applied in theatre and not removed until 48 hours post-op, unless concerns are raised about the wound. These wounds usually heal within eight to fourteen days depending on type and site of surgery. This should coincide with the removal of clips or sutures.

If you experience signs of infection or have other concerns, please contact the infection control helpline (see useful numbers section).

Your operated site may be swollen, painful, bruised and inflamed for a while – these are all common side effects of the surgery you have had. We do however encourage you to be vigilant and tell a member of staff (or call the infection control helpline) if you feel something is not right or is worsening.

Post-operative wound advice

Should you develop any problems or concerns about your wound please contact us for advice rather than go to your GP. We are experts in orthopaedics and wound care and would rather you phoned and asked us than worried about your wound at home.

Clips or stitches

Clips and stitches are usually removed 10-14 days after your operation. Either we will arrange for a district nurse to remove your stitches or clips or you will be advised to contact your practice nurse to arrange for her to see you. Unfortunately it is not possible to give you a set time for district nurse calls and sometimes it can be late in the afternoon.

Bath or shower

Please do not have a bath until your wound is



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completely healed though a quick shower is fine if your wound is healing well. Most dressings we use are shower proof, so having a shower is encouraged.

Observe your wound for signs of possible infection

The following are signs of a possible infection and it is important that you contact us should you develop them;

- A discharge or ooze from the wound which may be clear, blood stained or yellow/green pus
- Pain or soreness in addition to the discomfort experienced following the operation you have had
- Redness or inflammation spreading out from the edge of the wound
- If the area around the wound becomes swollen
- The edges of any part of the wound separate or gape open

These signs may not mean you have an infection but we are keen to offer you support should you be at all concerned

Medication

Upon discharge, the doctor will need to review your medication and write up a discharge form. The pharmacist also needs time to review your discharge form and your medication. This will allow them to make any necessary changes with regards to your medication. The hospital pharmacy team will check that you have enough medication to last you at least 14 days, including any you may have left at home. Any remaining medication of yours will be returned to you along with a supply of any other medication required. Where medication is unobtainable due to manufacturers delay/ time restrictions etc, you may need to make

arrangements to obtain a further supply from your own GP, to avoid delayed discharge. You should take the discharge letter for your GP to the surgery as soon as possible. This will ensure that you have a further supply of the medication required.

When taking your medication, you should follow the instructions printed on the labels. There is a patient information leaflet in each dispensed medicine which will give you more detailed information about the medicines you have been prescribed. If you have any other questions regarding your medicines, please ask a member of staff or contact the pharmacy helpline (see the Useful Numbers section).

Antibiotics

If you have any infections, you may have been prescribed antibiotics to take home. Antibiotics are given for a specific length of time and you need to ensure that you complete the course of treatment. You will need to take them at regular specified time intervals to keep the right amount of medicine in your blood stream. If you don't take your antibiotics according to the instructions given, this can lead to bacteria becoming resistant to them. These bacteria can then become difficult to treat.

There are some antibiotics that you may be discharged on, that require you to have regular blood tests. We will inform you of this, if this is required.

Some antibiotics have specific instructions about taking them before, after, or with meals therefore it is important that you read the details on the label.

For more detailed information about the medicine there is an information leaflet supplied with your antibiotics that you can read. If you have any queries regarding your antibiotics, please contact us as above.



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Physiotherapy

After your operation you may start some deep breathing exercises as soon as you come round from the anaesthetic. These are necessary because an anaesthetic may cause the lungs to produce extra secretions, which need to be cleared to prevent complications. They also ensure a good air flow to all areas of your lungs.

Take a deep breath in through your nose and relax, then breathe out through your mouth. You should keep your shoulders relaxed and concentrate on getting the air to the bottom of your lungs – you will feel your lower ribs move up and outwards. Take five deep breaths hourly.

Following your surgery you may be seen by a physiotherapist or given a physiotherapy information sheet.

Physiotherapy is a very important part of your post-operative treatment and will speed up your recovery. Physiotherapy helps to restore movement to near normal as possible as well as building strength in the muscles around the area where you have had surgery.

Physiotherapy treatment can range from:

- Advice and education about your surgery
- Exercises
- Assessing mobility and issuing of walking aids
- Stairs assessment
- Hydrotherapy

It very important that you follow the advice and exercises that you are given by the physiotherapists so that you get the best outcome from your surgery.

Occupational Therapy

- You will be seen by an Occupational Therapist (OT) after your operation.

- The OT will reconfirm with you if you have all your equipment in place prior to your discharge from hospital.
- OTs work closely with the rest of the multidisciplinary team for your safe discharge home from hospital.
- You will be able to discuss with your OT any concern or queries regarding your discharge from hospital.

Venous Thromboembolism (VTE) or blood clots

You should have received information about blood clots either at pre-operative screening or on admission, about the risks of blood clots, the signs and symptoms and what can be done to help prevent them. It is important that you read this carefully and raise any questions with the doctors or nurses looking after you.

Activities

- Avoid heavy housework for the first four weeks after discharge
- Avoid prolonged standing
- Begin gardening gently and do not undertake heavy digging/lifting for several months

Driving

It will be at your consultant's discretion as to when you can begin driving again, but it is usually after 6 weeks. You will need to let your insurance company know about your operation, and be able to perform an emergency stop safely before you can attempt to drive.

Washing

- You are advised to use a shower with a non-slip mat for the first few weeks
- You should not take a bath until the wound has healed and any non-soluble stitches have been removed.



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Returning equipment

You are free to retain any equipment for as long as you need it.

Equipment including crutches and Zimmer frames must be returned to the physiotherapy department at ROH, you can bring them with you when you have an outpatient's appointment.

Contact numbers

Please contact the ward you were discharged from if you have any concerns once discharged.

If you have any concerns out of hours (18:00-07:00) please contact the bleep holder at the Royal Orthopaedic Hospital on 0121 685 4000, asking the switchboard to contact bleep number 2627 and this will put you in touch with a member of nursing staff.

If you have any serious concerns please see your GP or attend your nearest Accident & Emergency.

Main hospital switchboard – 0121 685 4000

Outpatients – 0121 685 4153

Pre-operative assessment clinic –
0121 685 4035

Discharge liaison sister – 0121 685 4000 bleep
2684

PALS – 0121 685 4128

Infection Control Team – 0121 685 4354

ROCS – 0121 685 4020

Pharmacy

The hospital provides a pharmacy helpline which is open during office hours with an answering machine service available at other times. The following helpline is for any queries you may have relating to your medication.

Tel: 0121 685 4160

If your query is outside office hours and urgent please contact the ward from which you were discharged.