

Prehabilitation – a guide and summary

Physiotherapy Department



Patient information leaflet

This leaflet is for patients, or carers/family of patients, who have been referred to the prehabilitation service. In this leaflet you will find the answers the following questions:

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What is Prehabilitation?

Prehabilitation is a new service provided by the Royal Surrey County Hospital and funded by Macmillan Cancer Support.

Your Consultant is referring you with the aim of improving your physical fitness, your understanding of the pre and post-operative process as well as providing support on wellbeing and lifestyle. This will help you prepare for your surgery and recover more quickly.

It is a course of supervised exercise and wellbeing sessions. Prehabilitation involves Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and Dietitians who can give you advice and information in preparation for your surgery.

- It will **PREPARE** you physically and emotionally before your surgery
- It will **PROVIDE** you with information and guidance
- It will **PROMOTE** wellbeing lifestyle advice and support

Why is it important prior to my surgery?

Prehabilitation can help improve your recovery post-surgery and reduce the risk of problems, which can help you to get home from hospital sooner and manage your symptoms independently.

Possible post-op problems:

- Chest Infection
- Deep Vein Thrombus (DVT) – a blood clot in the veins
- Pulmonary Emboli (PE) – a blood clot in the arteries of the lungs
- Ileus/Constipation – reduced bowel movement

Who is in the team?

Physiotherapist – They complete an initial assessment with you, create a home exercise program, and set up and run the exercise classes. They will also help inform you about what to expect after your operation so that you are fully prepared. This will include teaching you breathing exercises to do after your operation to prevent chest infections.

Occupational Therapist – They run the wellbeing groups, which will give help and advice about what to expect before and after surgery. They will look at difficulties you may have with sleep, fatigue, mood or managing daily activities. In addition to this, if you need further support, they will offer one-to-one appointments either at the hospital or in your home.

Dietitian – They are oncology specialist Dietitians who are able to provide expert advice on the diet needed to help optimise your nutritional wellbeing prior to surgery. They can help you if you are experiencing specific dietary problems as a result of cancer and/or its treatment. They can also provide you and your family/carers with practical information on foods to choose, portion sizes and meal patterns.

What to expect at the initial assessment?

At your initial assessment the Physiotherapist will create an exercise programme for you to do in the gym and provide you with an exercise programme to do at home, tailored to your ability.

You will be asked to complete a walking test to measure your fitness. This involves measuring how far you can walk in six minutes. This will be carried out again at the end of the course. They will also assess your grip strength and your sit-to-stand ability.

An information pack and relevant additional material will also be provided. You may bring someone with you if you wish.

What will be expected of me?

You will be encouraged to follow a home exercise programme with support from the Physiotherapist. You will also be invited to attend **two group exercise classes** and **one wellbeing session** per week.

Monday

- 13.30-14.30 Exercise Class – Physiotherapy Gym
- 14.45-15.45 Wellbeing Class – Physiotherapy Meeting Room

Wednesday

- 15.00-16.00 Exercise class – Physiotherapy Gym

These will help you to manage symptoms, day-to-day tasks and help prepare physically for your surgery sessions **for up to five weeks prior to your surgery**.

The group exercise class is for **one hour twice a week** and is run by the Physiotherapists in the Physiotherapy department gym. The Physiotherapists will tailor your exercise plan to your level of fitness.

The wellbeing session will be for **one hour once a week** led by the Occupational Therapist. This will be on a variety of topics.

What do I need to bring to the exercise session?

- Comfortable clothes suitable for exercise
- Appropriate footwear – non-slip such as trainers or flexible rubber soled shoes
- Water
- A towel.

There are small changing rooms if you wish to get changed on arrival, please allow time for this.

Try to avoid exercising immediately after eating, eat at least an hour before exercising (two hours after a heavy meal).

Why do I need to exercise?

It is important to exercise and keep active, some of the benefits include:

- Strengthening your muscles, joints and bones
- Reducing tiredness and increasing energy levels
- Reducing anxiety and depression
- Improving mood and quality of life
- Reducing the risk of other health problems
- Increasing your confidence
- Improving sleep quality

As you build up your strength and fitness you can choose activities that you enjoy. Walking, dancing, yoga, swimming and cycling are all activities that will help you to become fitter and healthier.

What if I am having chemotherapy/radiotherapy?

There may be times during your treatment when you feel unwell and tired. We can guide you on appropriate levels of exercise/activity during this time with regular reviews.

Research tells us that exercising during cancer treatment is safe and can have many benefits.

It is important to stay as active as possible. Regular contact with the therapists during your treatment will help support your progress.

What are the breathing exercises?

The breathing exercises are part of the Active Cycle of Breathing Technique. This technique will help to prevent chest infections developing after surgery.

You will be taught this before and after surgery.



Breathe in



Breathe out

Keeping your shoulders relaxed place your hands onto your ribs and take a deep breath in through your nose.

- Hold for 3 seconds.
- Keeping your arms and shoulders relaxed breathe out.
- Repeat 3 times

What will the wellbeing sessions focus on?

- Support and services available to you
- Preparing for surgery
- Eating well
- Daily activity and managing fatigue
- Sleep and emotional wellbeing

What other information is there?

Support from other patients, carers and professionals

Prehabilitation offers a group environment for you to meet people and socialise in a welcoming and comfortable setting.

It also offers an opportunity for you to ask the therapists questions and discuss any concerns you might have about your forthcoming treatment.

Recommended resources

Macmillan Information Booklets available at: www.macmillan.org.uk

- Move more
- Fatigue management
- Physical activity and cancer
- Healthy eating and cancer
- Eating problems and cancer

References

- 1) ACPRC. 2011. Active Cycle of Breathing Image. The Active Cycle of Breathing Techniques. Available at: http://www.acprc.org.uk/publications/patient_information_leaflets.asp Access 19th October 2017
- 2) Macmillan Cancer Support. 2017. Benefits of being active. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://www.macmillan.org.uk/information-and-support/coping/maintaining-a-healthy-lifestyle/keeping-active/benefits-of-being-active.html#8420> Accessed 19th October 2017
- 3) Cancer Research UK. 2017. Exercise guidelines for cancer patients. [ONLINE] Available at: <http://www.cancerresearchuk.org/about-cancer/coping/physically/exercise-guidelines> Accessed 19th October 2017

Contact details

Physiotherapy Department

Telephone: 01483 464153

Opening hours: 8am–4pm, Monday to Friday

Occupational Therapy Department

Telephone: 01483 461766

Opening hours: 8am–4pm, Monday to Friday

Dietitian Department

Telephone: 01483 464119

Opening hours: 8am–4pm, Monday to Friday

PALS and Advocacy contact details

Contact details of independent advocacy services can be provided by our Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) who are located on the right hand side as you enter the main reception area. PALS are also your first point of contact for health related issues, questions or concerns surrounding RSCH patient services.

Telephone: 01483 402757

Email: rsc-tr.pals@nhs.net

Opening hours: 9.00am–3.00pm, Monday to Friday

If you would like information documents in large print, on tape or in another language or form please contact PALS.

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