

# After your operation

## Information to help you recover



the women's  
the royal women's hospital

After an operation, staying in bed and not moving much can increase your risk of getting a chest infection and blood clots in your legs. You can lower this risk by following these simple instructions.

### Immediately after your operation

To reduce your risk of problems, it's important that you do the following.

#### Take big breaths

Take 5 big deep breaths and hold each breath for 3 seconds.

Repeat this every hour.

If you feel like you need to cough, firmly support your tummy with your hands or a pillow. Blow your breath out in a strong huff. If the huff doesn't help, try a gentle cough.

#### Move your feet and legs

Move your feet up and down and in circles. You can do this while still in bed or while sitting in a chair.

Repeat this at least 20 times every hour.

#### Get moving as soon as possible

The day after your operation, it's best to get out of bed, sit in a chair, and take a short walk. This helps you recover and reduces the chance of problems.

In the following days aim to spend more time out of bed and walk a bit further. Gradually increase this over time.

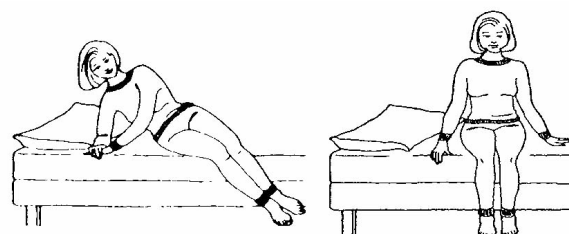
### Getting in and out of bed

The most comfortable way to get in and out of bed is called a log roll. To do this:

- Bend your knees and roll onto your side. Keep your shoulders and hips in line.



- Slide your feet over the side of the bed. Push yourself up using both of your hands in front of your body.



- Do the same in reverse to get into bed.



Use this method for the first 6 weeks after your surgery to help your body heal.

## At home

There are things you can do to help yourself recover over the next 6 weeks at home.

### Take care of yourself

- Spend at least 30 minutes lying down every day.
- Make sure you have good posture when sitting and standing.
- Don't lift heavy objects, push or pull things, or do any activities that require a lot of effort. Only do light household chores.
- If you do have to lift things, do it carefully. Gently tighten your deep abdominal (tummy) and pelvic floor muscles, bend at your knees, and keep your back straight.
- Take daily walks. Regular exercise improves general health and wellbeing. Start slowly and gradually increase the distance and speed that you walk. Try to walk 30 minutes a day by 6 weeks after your operation.
- Avoid strenuous and high impact exercises like lifting weights, sit-ups, and running for the first 12 weeks. You can return to them gradually when you feel ready or based on your surgeon's advice.
- Avoid smoking.

## Maintain healthy bladder and bowel habits

Drink between 1.5 to 2 litres of fluid a day. That's about 8 cups. Water is the best choice. This will help both your bladder and bowel function.

### Healthy bladder habits

- Only go to the toilet when you need to go. Don't go 'just-in-case'.
- Let your bladder completely empty without straining to wee.

## Healthy bowel habits

- Avoid getting constipated and straining to poo.
- Eat plenty of high fibre foods, like fruit, vegetables, nuts, and wholemeal bread.
- Exercise regularly.
- When you're sitting on the toilet, lean forward and let your tummy relax.
- Use a foot stool under your feet so that your knees are above your hips.
- Don't hold your breath while using the toilet.



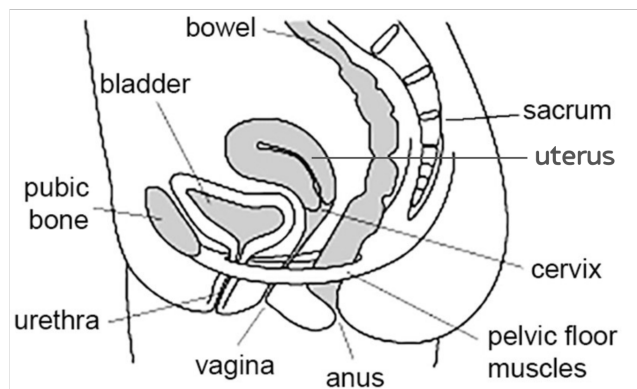
## Pelvic floor exercises

- Pelvic floor muscle exercises can be started the day after your operation once your catheter has been removed. The catheter is the thin tube that was put into your bladder before your operation.
- Complete the exercises 3 times a day, 5 times a week.
- An exercise diary can help you keep track of your exercises and may keep you motivated.

Having strong pelvic floor muscles helps you control when you go to the toilet and reduces the chance of leaks from your bladder or bowel. They do this by keeping the tubes that take urine and poo from your body tightly closed.

They also support pelvic organs when there's extra pressure, like when you cough, sneeze, lift things, or do activities that involve pushing and pulling.

It's important that you exercise your pelvic floor muscles as recommended after pelvic surgery.



## How to do pelvic floor exercises

Get comfortable and relax your tummy, bottom and thighs. Breathe normally.

- Squeeze and lift the muscles around your anus and vagina like you're trying to stop yourself from weeing or passing wind (farting). These are your pelvic floor muscles.
- Hold for as long as you can while continuing to breathe normally. In the beginning, try to hold for 6 seconds.
- Relax the muscles completely for 6 seconds.
- Repeat this exercise 6 times in a row, 3 times a day, 5 times a week.
- As your muscles get stronger, gradually build up to 8 second holds, 6 second relax, 12 times in a row, 3 sets across the day.

## Functional bracing

- When you cough, sneeze, laugh, or do something that requires effort, tighten your pelvic floor muscles. This will give you more control over your bladder and bowel and help prevent leaking.

## Do you need an interpreter?



You can ask for an interpreter if you need one.

## Family Violence Support

### 1800 Respect National Helpline

You can get help if you have experienced sexual assault, domestic or family violence and abuse.

You can call any time of day or night.

1800 737 732

[1800respect.org.au](https://www.1800respect.org.au)

## For more information

### Royal Women's Hospital

Physiotherapy Department  
Level 1, Royal Women's Hospital  
20 Flemington Rd  
Parkville Vic 3052

T: (03) 8345 3160

Monday to Friday 8.00am – 4.30pm

**Disclaimer:** This fact sheet provides general information only. For specific advice about your healthcare needs, you should seek advice from your health professional. The Royal Women's Hospital does not accept any responsibility for loss or damage arising from your reliance on this fact sheet instead of seeing a health professional. If you require urgent medical attention, please contact your nearest emergency department.  
© The Royal Women's Hospital 2025.