Post-Operative Breathing and Leg Exercises
Following surgery, especially abdominal surgery, there is a tendency for your lungs to produce more mucous than usual and not to expand fully. This is partly due to the effects of the anaesthetic, and partly because you are not moving around as freely following your surgery. In addition, due to your decreased activity, you are also at risk of developing blood clots, especially in your legs.

The following exercises are designed to help you recover from your surgery as quickly as possible and to prevent possible complications with your lungs and your circulation.

**Deep Breathing Exercises**

By breathing deeply and using your lungs as fully as possible you will move any secretions and be able to clear them more easily. Do a cycle of 5 deep breaths every hour.

Start by placing your hands on your ribs and take a deep breath in through your nose, expanding your lower chest. You should feel your ribs push against your hands. Breathe out slowly through your mouth until all the air is gone.

For every other breath, hold your breath for 3 seconds. This will help keep the lungs fully open.

**Coughing**

Coughing is necessary to clear secretions that may accumulate in your lungs. This should be done after the breathing exercises.

If lying down, bend your knees and support your incision with a pillow or your hands to make it more comfortable.

In sitting, support your incision, lean forward and keep your feet on the floor. After your 5 deep breaths, breathe in and cough out sharply.

Repeat this cycle twice or for as long as you have secretions to clear.

** You will not put your incision at risk by coughing**

**You will not put your incision at risk by coughing**
**Leg Exercises**

Leg exercises are important to maintain good blood circulation in your legs, maintain muscle strength, and prevent joint stiffness.

Do each exercise for *five* repetitions every hour while awake for the first few days or until you are up and walking around.

a) Pump your feet up and down at the ankles.

b) With your legs straight, make circles with your feet.

c) Bend and straighten your knees by sliding your heels up and down the bed.

d) With your legs straight tighten the muscle above your knee and push the back of your knee down into the bed. Hold for 5 seconds and then relax. Alternate legs.

**Moving in Bed**

Change your position often, at least every two hours while awake. If you have difficulty moving because of your incision, here are some tips.

- **To move your body sideways:** Lie on your back, bend your knees, lift your hips and shift them sideways, then follow with your shoulders.

- **To roll onto your side:** Bend your knees, support your incision with your hand, and roll like a log.

- **When rolling on your side:** it is easier if the bed rail is up. Reach across to hold onto the bed rail, and pull yourself onto your side, rolling like a log.

- **To sit up on the side of the bed:** log roll onto your side, drop your legs over the edge of the bed and push up using your arms.
Physical Activity
The evening of your surgery you may be able to sit up, dangle your legs over the side of the bed and get up to a chair with assistance. The next day you can continue to progress your activity. Depending on how you tolerate the activity, you may be able to walk in your room and sit up in a chair for short periods.

Each day you will increase your activity level as tolerated until you are able to walk around the ward independently. Activity assists the process of healing. Activity should be short and frequent, rather than one long period (e.g. you should aim to get up and move at least 3–4 times a day, with assistance as necessary).

If you have any questions please ask the physiotherapist or your nurse on the unit.

We wish you a speedy recovery.