



Looking after yourself after surgery

This is a simple guide to how you will be feeling in the first few days after surgery and what you can do to feel more comfortable and support your own recovery.

The information below is a general overview only. Please remember that every patient's care is individualised. If you have any specific questions or concerns, just speak to your Lifehouse care team.

On the day of surgery

What to expect

- You are likely to feel tired; some fatigue after surgery is normal.
- An anticoagulation injection will be given in the fatty layer of the tissue just under your skin to prevent blood clots.
- You will have special compression garments called TED stockings fitted and applied to prevent blood clots.
- You may be able to take clear fluids if the doctor believes you are ready.

What you can do

- Rest
- Keep your lungs in good condition by doing some deep breathing. Your Lifehouse care team will also show you how to use an incentive spirometer. Do this six times an hour to keep your lungs clear.
- Family and friends are welcome to visit during visiting hours.
- Start thinking about your arrangements for going home after you have been discharged. It's important to ask a friend or family member to pick you up and take you home. It's also good to have someone stay with you for after you get home so that you can settle in and feel safe and comfortable.
- If you have any concerns about your discharge including how you are going to get home or how you will look after yourself when you get home, please talk to one of the nurses in your Lifehouse care team.

Day 1

What to expect

- You may be able to start eating some light meals; your doctor will let you know if you are ready.
- You will probably have your urinary catheter removed; your doctor will review your condition to make sure you are ready.

What you can do

- Continue to keep your lungs healthy by doing some deep breathing using an incentive spirometer.
- Continue to wear your TED stockings to prevent blood clots.
- Shower with assistance

Day 1 continued

What to expect

- The intravenous fluids you have been having over the last day or so will be stopped.
- Any intravenous pain medication you have been having will be discontinued (sometimes this is called patient controlled analgesia).
- You will be put on to some regular oral pain medication if pain is an issue for you.
- You will be given laxatives to deal with constipation (a common side effect of surgery).
- You will be encouraged to get out of bed and walk to the shower with help.

What you can do

- Take pain medication regularly if pain is an issue for you.
- If pain increases, speak to your nurse and ask for stronger pain relief.
- Family and friends are welcome to visit during visiting hours.

Day 2

What to expect:

- You will probably be ready to go back on to a normal diet.
- You will be encouraged to take three or four short walks a day, without assistance.
- You will continue to have regular oral pain medication if pain is an issue for you.
- You will be given laxatives to deal with constipation (a common side effect of surgery).
- **If you are able to walk around, eat and drink, and your pain can be controlled with oral pain medication, then you will be discharged today.**

What you can do:

- Continue to keep your lungs healthy by doing some deep breathing using an incentive spirometer.
- Continue to wear your TED stockings to prevent blood clots.
- Continue your physical activity, moving around, taking a shower, or going for short walks.
- Ensure that a family member or friend will be available at discharge to take you home and help you settle in safely.

At discharge

What to expect:

- By now you will be able to walk independently and you will be eating your normal diet.
- A nurse or Clinical Nurse Consultant (CNC) will visit you to discuss your post-operative care and medication instructions. These are the things you will be doing for yourself at home while you recover from surgery. You will be given a Post Discharge Care Instruction Sheet to take home with you.
- Before discharge is complete, you will be given post-operative appointments with your specialist and at the nurse-led clinic.

What you can do:

- Continue to keep your lungs healthy by doing some deep breathing and using an incentive spirometer.
- Keep up your physical activity and continue to wear TED stockings.
- Make sure you are comfortable with your discharge instructions and post-operative medications; if you have any concerns or questions, talk them through with one of the nurses in your Lifehouse care team.
- Return to normal meals, but aim to make your diet as healthy as possible.
- Reduce your chance of developing constipation by drinking plenty of fluids and taking laxatives as necessary.
- **Five days after your operation** you can remove your surgical dressings.