Department of physiotherapy

Guidance following scoliosis surgery

This information is intended as a guide for patients when they return home after surgery. The physiotherapist on the ward will advise you about any specific exercises you need to do to help with your posture before you go home.

You will be given pain relieving medicines to take home on discharge which will be based on your individual needs. You should continue to take these regularly for the first two weeks or as directed. Regular pain relief may be necessary for four to six weeks.

You should continue the recovery and rehabilitation process at home. Try and avoid doing any activity for too long but move little and often. The trunk (back and abdominal muscles) will strengthen gradually and every so often they will get tired and ache. Usually lying down for a short period will relieve this so rest when necessary. As your body adjusts to your new posture, you will become more comfortable. You have to learn to do normal everyday activities from your ‘new position’.

Sometimes when you start to increase your activity levels, your body is inclined to resume the old position, as it is more familiar. For example, when writing or eating, your right shoulder may be used to dropping forward. It is important to try to maintain the corrected posture and slowly teach yourself to work in this position.

You will have two dressings on your surgical site. The top one is a pressure dressing; this will be removed by the nursing staff on Day Two after your surgery. The dressing underneath will be left on during your stay in hospital. This will be removed by your GP or practice nurse 10-14 days after your surgery and you will need to arrange an appointment for this.

You will be able to have a shower one week after your surgery, however you will still need to be careful and try to avoid getting your dressing wet. If your wound is healing well once your dressing has been removed by the GP or practice nurse, you will then be able to shower and bath as normal.

Increase activity levels steadily as you are able over the next month. Consider returning to school or college or work when you are coping with a whole day up and about at home. Minimise what you need to carry. Make sure you have a comfortable chair to sit on (take a cushion if necessary) and avoid sitting still for too long. A flexible approach is helpful to avoid getting over-tired.
Five to eight weeks

☐ Outpatient appointment and check x-ray.
☐ Physiotherapy programme will commence (you will receive a letter soon after discharge from hospital with details.)

Activity guidelines

Two to six weeks

- Gradually increase the frequency and length of time spent sitting, standing and walking. Decrease the amount of time spent lying and resting.

If your back becomes more uncomfortable then you are probably doing too much. You will probably benefit from lying down for a rest in the early afternoon.

Six weeks

- Return to school part time (for example: half days or every other day).
- Attend outpatient physiotherapy if required.

Two to three months

- Return to school full time.

After three months

- Increase time and distance walking, increase pace as able.
- Aim to increase fitness.
- Return to college or work full time.
- Can go swimming and cycling.
- Safe to fly on airlines

Six months

- Increase time and distance walking, increase pace as able
- Aim to increase fitness.
- Non-competitive swimming for example lengths of a pool.
- Cycling/ dancing/ jogging increasing to running.
- Acceleration/ deceleration and turning.
- No contact sport.

10-12 months

- Competitive contact sport.
- Skiing/ trampolining
- Roller coaster rides

Patients have regular follow up in the clinic with x-rays for a minimum of three years.
Contacts:

Ward D2: 01223 217250

Paediatric Scoliosis Nurse Specialist - Kim Czwojdrak

Direct line: 01223 256658
Working hours 08:00-16:00, Monday - Friday

Scoliosis co-ordinator: 01223 216854

Physiotherapists:

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We are now a smoke-free site: smoking will not be allowed anywhere on the hospital site. For advice and support in quitting, contact your GP or the free NHS stop smoking helpline on 0800 169 0 169.

Other formats:

If you would like this information in another language, large print or audio, please ask the department where you are being treated, to contact the patient information team: patient.information@addenbrookes.nhs.uk.

Please note: We do not currently hold many leaflets in other languages; written translation requests are funded and agreed by the department who has authored the leaflet.

Document history

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Contact number: 01223 245151
Publish/Review date: July 2017/July 2020
File name: PIN2773_guidance_following_scoliosis_surgery_V3.doc
Version number/Ref: 3/PIN2773 / Document ID 21692