

Recovering from surgery is hard work. It takes time for the body to heal (externally and internally). You will be tired and exercise can exhaust you. Your concentration will be limited and you may find you forget things.

Things You Should Not Do

1) You should not drive until your concentration has returned and you can put your foot on the emergency brake with comfort

2) If you have had vaginal surgery you should avoid sexual intercourse for 4 weeks, or until any discharge or bleeding has settled.

Things You Should Do

1) Continue exercises given by physiotherapist. Have a "trigger" factor that reminds you to do them, such as putting the kettle on or passing urine.

2) Rest when tired - do what your body tells you. If you push yourself too hard you will be exhausted (but it will not harm you).

3) Take exercise on a little and often basis - gradually increasing the amount of exercise you do. Walking is excellent - but remember that you have to come back. Swimming is excellent exercise but you have to wait until any wound is dry and not weeping.

4) Do what you want. It is unlikely that you will want to work because you will feel tired and any physical work will be sore and cause pulling pains. These pains are harmless but uncomfortable. Do as much as you want. Your body will tell you to stop. Most women undertake light household jobs (help with meal preparation etc.) in the first fortnight and gradually increase activities until at 6-10 weeks when they are back to normal.

5) Eat a healthy diet containing fibre and protein: Drink plenty of fluids during the day. The diet and fluids, plus exercise, will hopefully prevent constipation. Take a gentle laxative if bowels become sluggish. Lactulose can be obtained from the chemist or visit a health food

shop for a more natural remedy.

6) Bathe or shower as you wish. It is important to keep the genital area and the wound (if you have one) clean. Change sanitary pads frequently. Tampons are not usually recommended but if you choose to use them, change them frequently and insert them gently.

Normal Symptoms

1) Pain/Discomfort

A little pain or discomfort is normal - it should be relieved by your favourite painkiller (regular Paracetamol/Aspirin) and should become less of a problem as time passes.

2) Tiredness

You have had a major operation and a general anaesthetic you are likely to be tired in the first few weeks after your operation. Rest when you are tired. Exercise will exhaust you but it is not harmful. Your concentration is likely to be impaired and you may forget things. You will recover your mental energy but this may take some time.

3) Vaginal Discharge

This is a normal symptom. It may persist for 2-3 months.

The discharge should remain small, but is an inconvenience. The colour may vary (red>brown>white>cream>yellow>pink>white>disappear) and there may be "spotting" of fresh blood. The discharge may contain pieces of stitching material.

4) Pulling Pains

It is common to get pulling pains as you move. They are normal. Nothing will fall apart. Advice such as stay in bed or do not lift was sensible in the old days when suture material could brake but this does not apply to modern surgery.

5) Sensation around the wound

It is normal to get a funny feeling over and around any wound. This settles but takes quite a while.

6) Wound discharge

A little moist loss from the wound is normal. It should be watery and ranges from clear, red or pale yellow. It should not be deep yellow or green and the amount should not exceed several spots.

Every one is different and it is difficult to predict your recovery time.

Abnormal Symptoms

- 1) Heavy blood loss or clots from the vagina - greater than a normal period
- 2) Painful wound site - Inflammation and tenderness of the wound. Discharge from the wound.
- 3) Burning pain on passing urine
- 4) Increasing vaginal discharge - similar to a normal period
- 5) Offensive discharge
- 6) Severe persistent pain

If any of the symptoms listed arise, contact the sister on the ward, your gp or your surgical houseman/registrar

Returning to Work

You are the best judge of when you are ready to go back to work. This is usually between 6-12 weeks, depending on the type of job you have. Your doctor will advise you.

Exercise/Sport

Again you are the best judge of when you are ready to return to an exercise regime or sport. The time scale will depend on your level of fitness before your operation. The best advice is to gradually increase your exercise until you feel you are back to full fitness. You may strain a muscle if you return suddenly after a long break but otherwise do what you can and let your body tell you how much you can do.

Sex

When the operation involves the vagina the edge has to heal. It is advisable to avoid intercourse until the discharge has settled.

High Fibre Choices

Breakfast cereals - Bran cereals e.g. All Bran, wholegrain cereals e.g. Puffed Wheat, Shredded Wheat, Weetabix, Muesli, Oats.

Wholegrain Bread and Flour - Wholemeal bread.

Products made with 100% wholemeal flour [e.g. scones, pastry, crumbles].

Biscuits and Crispbreads - Wholegrain crispbreads e.g. Ryvita, digestive biscuits and oatcakes.

Rice and Pasta - Brown rice and Wholemeal pasta. Use in milk puddings as well as savoury dishes, soups and salads.

Pulses - All types: lentils, beans, peas. Incorporate into casseroles, soups or salads and savoury dishes.

Other Vegetables and Salads - All kinds including potatoes in their jackets, green salads and root vegetables.