



A patient guide to

Recovering from surgery  
and staying active in hospital

On the **MEND**

**M**edicines

**E**xercise

**N**utrition

**D**aily Activity

After surgery we understand you will be keen to recover quickly and go home. Many of our patients are able to get up either on the day of surgery or the next day. It is normal to feel anxious about getting out of bed for the first time after surgery but our experienced staff will assist you.

Unless bed rest is requested by your doctor, staying in bed too much can slow your recovery and increase your risk of post-operative complications.

The benefits of moving and being active in hospital include:

- Better breathing
- More able to fight infection
- Improved appetite and digestion
- Sounder sleep
- Better mood
- More able to cope when returning home
- Less skin breakdown or pressure sores
- Less weakness and fatigue
- Less dizziness
- Less risk of falls
- Less pain
- Less confusion

Staying physically and mentally active can help you recover faster from surgery, help you regain your independence, shorten your stay in hospital and reduce the chance of problems when you go home.

Losing the ability and confidence to look after yourself can also mean losing your independence; either because you need more support or because you cannot return to where you were living.

So that you can be safely On The MEND following your orthopaedic surgery, our experienced staff are here to help, guide and advise on your recovery with:

- **M**edicines
- **E**xercises
- **N**utrition
- **D**aily living activities

## On The MEND: Medicines

It is normal to experience acute pain and discomfort after surgery. Your doctor, pharmacist and the Acute Pain Team will prescribe the most appropriate pain relief medication for you.



It is important to take the medication regularly to allow you to carry out your exercises and rehabilitation programme each day.

Acute post-operative pain is often eased by moving around and completing gentle exercises little and often throughout the day.

Some common painkillers can have the side effect of making you constipated – so you may also be prescribed a laxative. It is very important to take laxatives as prescribed as well as having regular drinks of water/tea/juice. Please be assured these will not give you diarrhoea but make it easier for you to open your bowels more comfortably.

Remember pain may last for several weeks after surgery but will gradually get easier the more you do.

## On The MEND: Exercises

### MOVE

Many patients in hospital are active for only a few minutes each day. At RNOH you have access to a team of highly skilled physiotherapists who will help you to be active. They will:

- Advise you on exercises and provide a rehabilitation programme when needed
- Help you to move around and/or walk after surgery if you need support or assistance
- Provide you with an appropriate walking aid and teach you how to use it.

To help yourself, you can:

- Ensure you regularly take your pain relief and ask for extra if required
- Keep changing your position, whether you are in bed or sat in a chair
- Do your prescribed exercises on your own, either on the bed or in a chair, with guidance from your exercise sheet or staff
- Sit out of bed as soon as possible and as often as possible. Following many surgeries, you will be able to get out of bed on the day of surgery
- Walk around the ward when safe to do so.

## On The MEND: Nutrition

### EAT well in hospital.

It is an important part of your recovery process.

There is a varied choice of meals available every day, including options for different dietary needs. Ask your Ward Host for more information. You may also be referred to a dietician if you need advice or support with a special diet or if you are having difficulty eating well.

Even if your appetite is poor:

- Try to eat something at each mealtime
- If you don't feel like anything from the menu, we will offer you an alternative. There is a choice of high energy soups and milkshakes, cheese and biscuits or yoghurt
- Eat 'little and often'; try to have snacks and milky drinks between meals – there are snacks available on all our wards
- Try to sit out in the bedside chair and use the table for all meals (unless you are on strict bed rest). If you have been placed on bed rest but are able to sit for periods of time profile the bed to an upright sitting position (staff can show you how)
- Sitting upright will assist with your digestion

If your visitors want to bring food in for you, the following snacks would be suitable to keep in your bedside locker:

- Small quantities of fresh or dried fruit or nuts
- Individual cartons of fruit juice (that do not need to be kept in the fridge)
- Biscuits / individually wrapped cakes

Your ward will have a copy of the guidelines on bringing food into hospital, if you need more information.

**Remember; Good hand hygiene is very important to reduce the risk of infection.**



**Wash your hands!**

- Before you eat
- After you have been to the toilet
- If you can't get to the bathroom, ward staff will offer you hand wipes to clean your hands.

## DRINK

keep well hydrated

Following an operation, you can often feel thirsty. If you are not drinking enough you might also feel drowsy, confused and have a headache.



Not drinking can increase your risk of developing urine infections, pressure ulcers and can make you more likely to fall if you are unsteady on your feet.

You might need more drinks in hospital than you usually have at home; for example, if you have a temperature.

Try to have 7-10 cups of fluid a day (unless you have been placed on fluid restriction by your doctor).

- Have tea, coffee, milk, soft drinks or water
- Try and have a drink every time you are offered one from the trolley and have water from the water jug, too
- Make sure your drink is within reach and if you are not drinking well, keep sipping drinks throughout the day
- Ask us to refill your water jug if you need more water
- Ask us to pass your drink to you, if you can't reach it
- If your appetite is poor, a milky drink will also give you protein and energy as well as fluid.



## On the MEND: Daily activities of living

### STAY ACTIVE

After surgery it can seem daunting to think about how you are going to manage at home. Simple tasks such as getting in and out of bed, getting washed and dressed may be more difficult, especially if you have to wear a spinal or hip brace or your movement is restricted following surgery.

That is why it is important to practise these activities in hospital under the guidance of experienced Occupational Therapy and Nursing staff.

By doing this you will feel more confident in your abilities to take care of yourself at home or help us to know what additional support, if any, will be required on discharge.

- Get washed each day – we have wet room facilities with showers available
- Walk to the toilet if possible
- Get up and get dressed every day in your own clothes
- Practise using the long handled aids if required for washing and dressing
- Sit out of bed to eat all meals if possible
- Stay mentally active - read newspapers or a book, complete crosswords or puzzles.

## Daily Tracker

Track your progress by placing a ✓ in the relevant box

| Today:                                   |             | Day<br>0 | Day<br>1 | Day<br>2 |  |  |
|--|-------------|----------|----------|----------|--|--|
| I had my surgery                         |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have taken my prescribed medication    | Painkillers |          |          |          |  |  |
|  | Laxatives   |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have got out of bed                    |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have got washed                        |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have dressed in day clothes            |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have sat out in the armchair           |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have drunk at least 7 glasses of fluid |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I sat out of bed for my meals            |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have done my exercises                 |             |          |          |          |  |  |
| I have walked around the ward            |             |          |          |          |  |  |

Remember you're **On The MEND** but it will take several weeks to fully recover.

## Notes

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If you would like this leaflet translated into another language/large print, please contact the Quality Team on 020 8909 5439.

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