Oxford Oesophagogastric Centre

Improving your fitness before a major operation
Information for patients
Improving your fitness before a major operation

There are many ways in which patients can improve their fitness before a major operation on the oesophagus (gullet), stomach, liver and pancreas.

**Stop smoking**

It cannot be emphasised enough that it is in your best interests to stop smoking as soon as possible before any major surgery. This will reduce the risk of any breathing problems during and after the operation.

There are several ways to seek information about stopping smoking:

- Make an appointment at your GP practice or health centre. There is usually a Smoking Cessation Advisor who can help give you advice about stopping smoking.
- Oxfordshire Smoking Advice Centre
  Telephone 01865 226663
- National Smoking Helpline
  0800 169 0 169

- **Reduce alcohol intake**
  It is helpful to stop or significantly reduce any heavy drinking of alcohol, in order to reduce problems with alcohol withdrawal after the operation, and to aid healing.

**Diet**

Eating a healthy diet can help wound healing and your general well-being after the operation. You may have experienced loss of appetite, a feeling of fullness and/or weight loss. Such problems should be discussed with your surgeon and the specialist nurse. We can refer you to the specialist dietician for advice to improve your nutritional state before the operation. The dietician will also visit you when you have been admitted to hospital.

It is very important to inform the specialist nurse, doctor, or dietician if you are losing weight, vomiting or your swallowing is getting worse.
**Moderate exercise**
Moderate exercise before the operation is useful to strengthen muscles, to reduce breathing problems, to build up stamina and to reduce fatigue after the operation. It is recommended that you take some form of regular exercise every day.

**Home circumstances**
It is useful to plan ahead for your discharge from hospital, and to identify any particular problems or needs before your surgery. These should be discussed with your specialist nurse and the nursing staff on the ward.

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**Pre-operative Assessment Clinic**
We will ask you to attend a pre-operative assessment clinic 1-2 weeks before the day of surgery, in order to assess your fitness for an anaesthetic and surgery. You will be seen by a nurse who will take a history of your general health. You may be seen by an anaesthetist at the same time. Tests will be carried out to provide further information relevant to your surgery – for example, blood tests. The information will be used to plan your care in hospital, and to deal with any problems as soon as possible.

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**Useful telephone numbers**

**Clinical Nurse Specialists:**
- Telephone: 01865 235706
- Telephone: 01865 741841, Bleep 1891 or 1977

**Dietician:**
- Telephone: 01865 741166, Bleep 4176
- Telephone: 01865 235419
If you need an interpreter or need a document in another language, large print, Braille or audio version, please call 01865 221473 or email PALSJR@orh.nhs.uk