

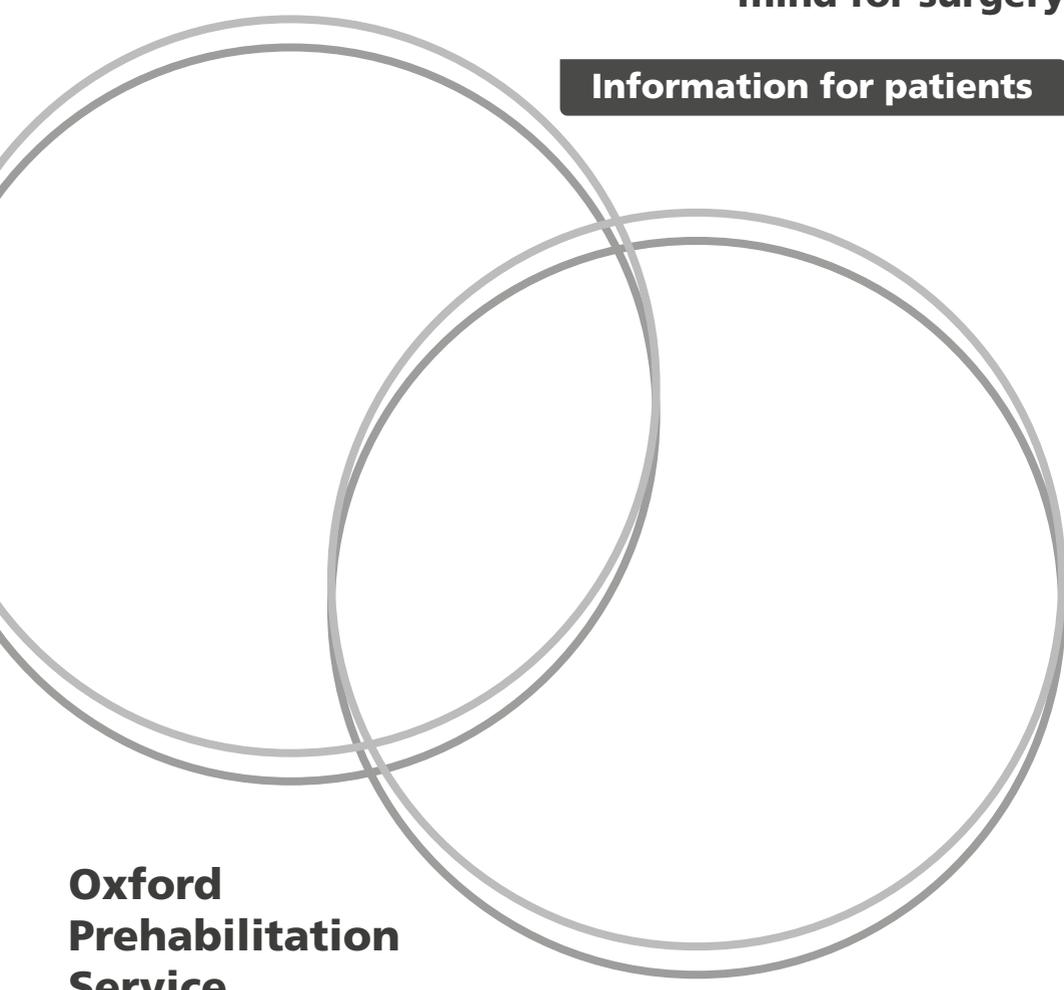


Oxford University Hospitals  
NHS Foundation Trust

# An Introduction to Prehabilitation

Preparing body and  
mind for surgery

Information for patients

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Oxford  
Prehabilitation  
Service

## **What is Prehabilitation?**

Prehabilitation is getting ready for major treatment or surgery through simple lifestyle changes to improve the health of your body and mind. This will allow for a quicker recovery and discharge from the hospital afterwards.

## **Why is Prehabilitation important?**

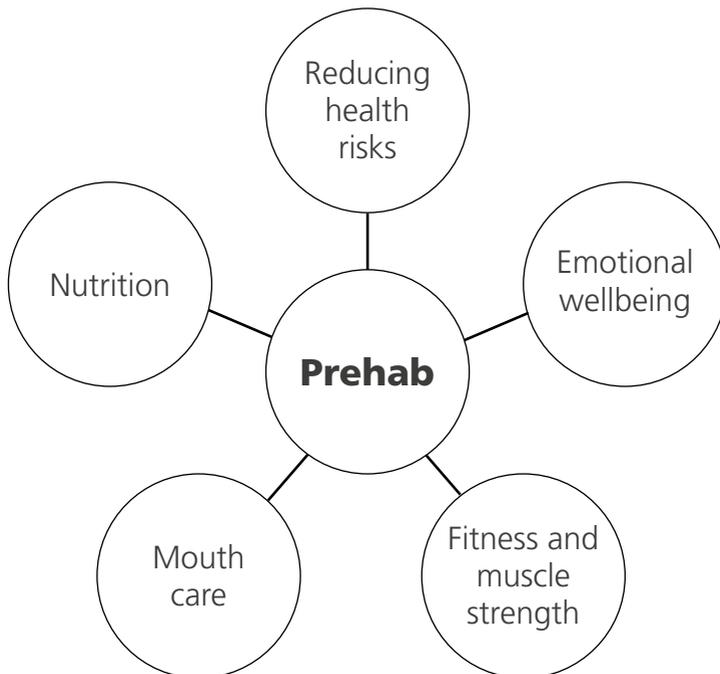
The stress of a major surgery is like running a marathon - both require preparation and training (The British Medical Journal,2017).

A major surgery can often have big impact on the body and require considerable amount of time to recover from afterwards. Treatments such as chemotherapy or radiotherapy may be necessary before your surgery which can also have considerable effect on your body's ability to manage the stress from the surgery. Prehabilitation advises on exercises, lifestyle choices and nutrition to improve your fitness, health and wellbeing before a planned surgery so that you recover and return to normal life quicker after the surgery.

# What are the elements of prehabilitation ?

Prehabilitation is made up of a combination of simple interventions. Exercise and physical activity is always present. Health and well being and diet support may be required depending on your individual need.

Several weeks may pass between the decision to go forward with the surgery and the surgery itself. Introducing changeable lifestyle behaviours during this period that can significantly reduce the burden of complications after surgery.

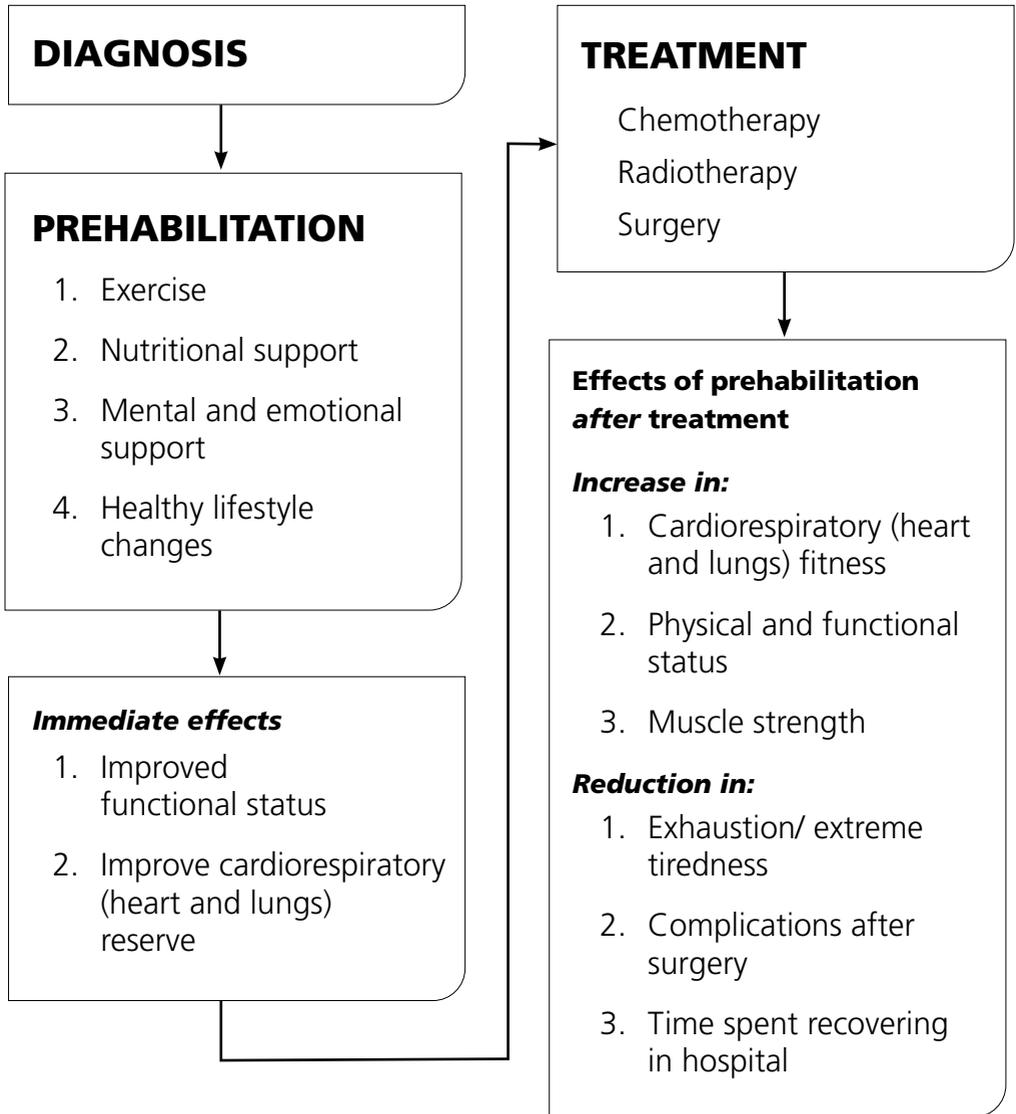


## **What are the benefits of Prehabilitation?**

Prehabilitation helps your body to react better to the treatment. Many patients become deconditioned (loss of physical strength, stamina and muscle tone) because of their illness. Poor appetite and poor nutrition can also affect the strength of the body. Research evidences suggest that it is safe to exercise in the weeks before surgery and during radiotherapy and chemotherapy. Prehabilitation helps to increase physical fitness and muscle strength by improving your body's exercise tolerance (how well your body can cope with the physical work), fitness of your heart and function of your lungs. You can improve your exercise tolerance by making a physical activity plan to increase the frequency, effort and duration of your chosen activity each week. Your pre-operative physiotherapy team can support you with making your plan if required.

Do not see your Prehabilitation goals as short-term changes or benefits. These lifestyle modifications can be long term changes which will help you and your family live well through your treatment and beyond.

# Health benefits of Prehabilitation



## **How do I attend the Prehabilitation session?**

You will receive a letter or an email inviting you to your Prehabilitation group session. Please read the information you receive and contact us on the Prehabilitation team email if you have any further queries or require additional support for the session.

## **What do I do after my Prehabilitation session?**

During the session we will provide you with information and advise to help set your prehabilitation goals, such as:

- Exercise programme to improve your physical fitness
- Nutrition to improve your diet
- Services to help you stop smoking or reduce alcohol intake
- Support services that can offer practical advice and emotional support
- General advice to help prepare for surgery

After the session we will receive some useful resources, including 'My Prehab Diary'. You can use the diary to set your Prehabilitation goals. It can be simple interventions like increasing the time and or distance you walk regularly or using the stairs at home more often. Every change you make has the ability to improve your general health, well-being and your recovery after surgery. Members of family and friends can adopt some of the lifestyle changes suitable to them and work with you in setting realistic goals.

Small, manageable changes are easier to stick to in the long term.

## **Will it affect my surgery if I cannot attend the Prehabilitation session?**

Your surgery will not be delayed or cancelled if you do not attend, though we highly recommend that you do attend as every little change helps. The benefits of taking part can be seen in as little as two weeks and the least active to start with often benefit the most from Prehabilitation.

If your surgery is cancelled or rescheduled, we advise that you continue with your individualised interventions under the programme to continue improve and /or maintain your physical and emotional health while waiting for your new date of surgery or decision of treatment.

## **What happens after surgery?**

Prehabilitation is designed to support you with preparation before your surgery. Your specialist team and ward team will provide you with the information and support you need after the surgery.

We hope you will continue to gain from the programme with real benefits to your health.

## **If you would like more information on Prehabilitation, please contact:**

### **Oxford Prehabilitation team**

(8.00am to 4.00pm Monday to Friday, except bank holidays)

Email: [eras@ouh.nhs.uk](mailto:eras@ouh.nhs.uk)

Tel: 01865 222147

## Further information

If you would like an interpreter, please speak to the department where you are being seen.

Please also tell them if you would like this information in another format, such as:

- Easy Read
- large print
- braille
- audio
- electronic
- another language.

We have tried to make the information in this leaflet meet your needs. If it does not meet your individual needs or situation, please speak to your healthcare team. They are happy to help.

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Oxford University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust  
[www.ouh.nhs.uk/information](http://www.ouh.nhs.uk/information)



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