

# Enhanced Recovery After Colorectal Surgery (ERAS)

Information and advice for patients and carers

## Getting Fit for Surgery

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This is the single most important step in helping to enhance your recovery after surgery.

Regular exercise will help your body to deal with the strain of a major operation.

It has also been shown to improve your psychological wellbeing and reduce stress levels.

Improving fitness doesn't happen overnight. To begin with, you may start with gentle exercises, every other day.

Begin slowly and aim to build up to 30mins for 5 days a week.

This leaflet has suggestions that may help you get started.

If you are already a member of a gym or swimming club, keep exercising or consider joining a class so that you don't have to exercise alone. Aqua-aerobics is a good way of improving fitness whilst being gentle on the joints.

### **But you don't need a gym to get fitter!**

Any activity that makes your heart beat a little faster, or makes you slightly out of breath, helps. Try using every day opportunities to make yourself fitter.

**Walking** regularly for 30 minutes or more can help to improve your sleep and lift your mood, as well as improving the health of your heart, lungs and circulation.

**Cycle or walk** short distances, where you might usually take the car.

Always exercise to the point where you are slightly out of breath (i.e. you can still talk) and are not gasping for breath.

If you feel unwell, at any point stop and where necessary seek medical advice.

There are lots of things you can do without even leaving your home.

**Using the vacuum** or sweeping for 20-30 minutes can get your heart racing.

**Gardening** is a great way to get some fresh air and give yourself a work-out. 30-40 minutes of gardening can burn more calories than a session of aerobics!

It has also been shown to improve your psychological wellbeing and reduce stress levels.

If you have problems with your mobility or joint pains, there are still plenty of exercises to get your heart pumping and strengthen your muscles.

You may wish to try some of these exercises.

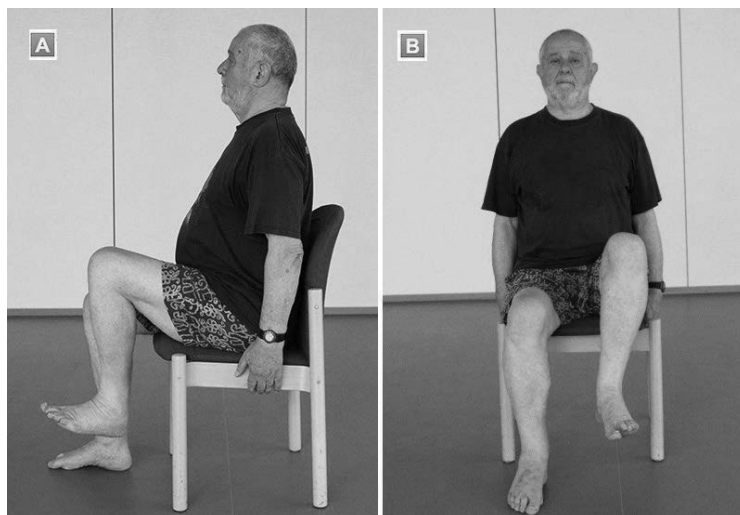
You may wish to start exercising sitting down.

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## Hip Marching

This exercise will strengthen hips and thighs, and improve flexibility.

- A. Sit upright and do not lean on the back of the chair. Hold on to the sides of the chair.
  - B. Lift your left leg with your knee bent as far as is comfortable. Place your foot down with control.
  - C. Repeat with the opposite leg.
- Do 5 lifts with each leg.



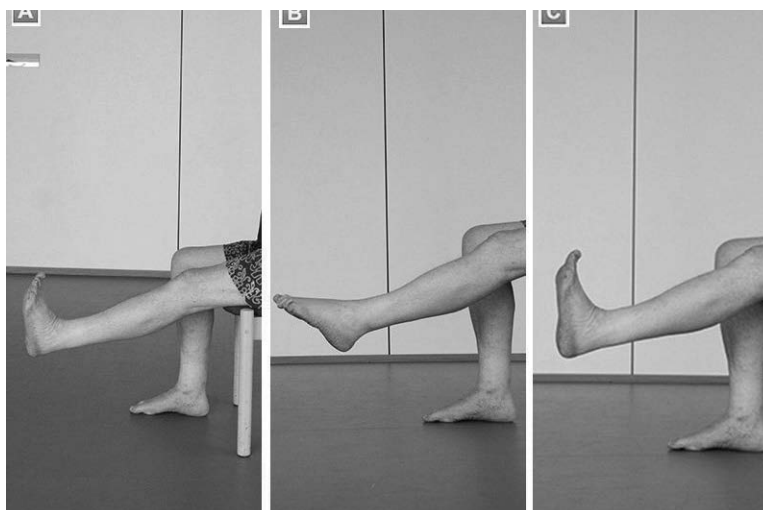
## Ankle Stretch

This will improve ankle flexibility and lower the risk of developing a blood clot.

- A. Sit upright, hold on to the side of the chair and straighten your left leg with your foot off the floor.
- B. With your leg straight and raised, point your toes away from you.
- C. Point your toes back towards you.

Try 2 sets of 5 stretches with each foot.

Then progress to standing exercises such as:



## Chair Rises

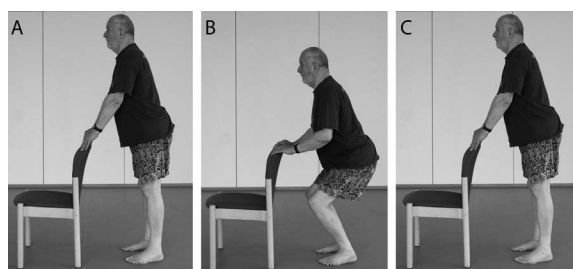
- Sit on a chair. Rise to a standing position without using your hands for support, with slow, controlled movements.
- Repeat for 1 minute.
- As you improve, try increasing the number you can do in 1 minute.



## Knee Squats

- Hold onto a chair or work surface for support.
- Squat down until your knee hides your big toe from view.
- Return to standing

Repeat at least 10 times.



## Step Ups

- Step with your right foot, onto the bottom step of a set of stairs.
- Bring the left foot up
- Step down with the right foot, followed by the left foot.

Hold onto the bannister if necessary. Repeat until you get short of breath. As you improve, try to increase the number of steps you can do in 1 minute!



The NHS 'livewell' website provides useful suggestions for more short exercise routines:

<https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/>

## Other useful websites

<http://www.tcv.org.uk/health>

Health for Life | TCV

<https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/parks-green-spaces/parks-sandwell>

<http://www.tgogc.com/Gyms/United-Kingdom/West-Midlands/>

Sitting exercises - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/sitting-exercises>

Walking for health - <https://www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/walking-for-health>

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