

### Exercise and Rest

You may feel more tired than you expect over the next couple of weeks. This is the time to take it easy and relax. However it is important to start gentle exercise. Walking is recommended. Start with short walks and increase the distance daily as you become fitter. Walking will help prevent lymphodema occurring.

Strenuous physical activity or heavy lifting should be avoided for 6-8 weeks. This is to help the skin between your legs heal completely. You should refrain from driving for 6 weeks and may drive when it is comfortable for you to do an emergency stop.

### Diet

A diet high in fruit, vegetables, fibre and water will help you maintain a regular bowel routine. Try to eat 5 portions of fruit or vegetables daily. A portion size is approximately the size of the palm of your hand. It is also important to try and manage to drink 2 litres of water a day to avoid constipation. If you get constipated a mild laxative can be obtained from your local pharmacy.

### Work

You will usually be able to return to work in a 6 weeks. Returning to work is dependent on how you feel and the type of work you do. If it is difficult for you financially please ask your nurse to refer you to a social worker.

### Emotions

A diagnosis of cancer can cause many emotions. You may find that you feel mood swings, disbelief and shock. These are normal reactions. It may be

hard for you to discuss things with your family and friends, but discussing your feelings helps to remove tensions and worries.

### Sexuality

You may feel a sense of loss at losing a part of your female anatomy. This is an understandable, natural emotion. It can be helpful to discuss any fears or worries with a sympathetic friend, your partner and /or the nurses and doctors.

It takes about 6 weeks for your body to heal after your operation and may be some time before you can enjoy sexual intercourse, depending on your surgery. There are other ways of being intimate, find ways that are mutually satisfying. It is important that you spend time together so that you can both talk about your feelings.

### Wound Care

It is important to continue with the regime of daily or twice daily showers and vulval irrigation that you commenced in hospital. Remember to follow the instructions your nurse gave you on caring for your vulval wound and vulval area.

If you feel that your vulval area is becoming uncomfortable, have more frequent showers and increase the vulval irrigations.

If your vulval or groin wounds become hot, red or sticky, or you feel unwell or have a fever contact your GP.

### Pain Relief

If you are on antibiotics it is important that you complete the course.

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You will need to take regular pain relief for at least the first week when you are discharged home. Then gradually wean off the regular day time doses and take when needed. Continue the night time doses for longer.

## Preventing infection

Complete the course of any antibiotics prescribed for you.

Avoid sources of possible infection such as spa pools and swimming pools until your wounds have completely healed.

## Worries

If anything is worrying you however small please feel free to talk to your nurse. She is there for you and will try and make your stay as comfortable as possible.

## Discharge Letter

A discharge letter is normally sent to your GP. Please tell the nurse caring for you if you do not wish this to happen. You may be given a date for a follow-up appointment with the surgeon.

- Vulval or groin wounds become reddened
- Offensive discharge from wounds
- Severe pain or pain that lasts for more than 48 hours
- High temperature
- Feeling unwell
- Increased swelling of your foot/feet/leg or legs

## Contact us

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