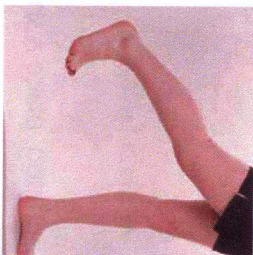


When you are comfortable performing the previous exercises and are comfortable walking start the following exercise:

Exercise 4:

Standing with feet slightly apart, holding on to a stable surface, for example your kitchen work top, lift affected leg backwards as shown.



Contact Details

If you would like to speak to the physiotherapist or have any questions about this leaflet please contact:

Burns and Plastic Surgery Physiotherapy
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**Patient information and
advice following your
Groin Dissection Operation**



Physiotherapy Services

You have recently had surgery to remove all or some of the lymph nodes in your groin. This leaflet contains information and advice about exercises, lymphoedema and returning to daily activities. This information will aid your recovery from your operation and provide general advice for the care of your leg(s) following the operation.

Why should I exercise?

It is important to exercise your legs following your operation in order to regain your full range of movement.

You may find that these movements have become limited following your surgery and this is often due to swelling, discomfort, clips and the positioning of drains in your skin. Exercise will help to regain your range of movement, help reduce swelling and prevent pain and stiffness.

What exercises should I be doing?

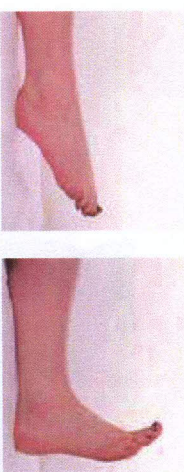
Most people benefit from simple exercises. The exercises on page 4 are recommended for you to start after your operation. They have been designed to help decrease the risks of you developing:

- Leg weakness
- Tightness of the skin, muscle
- Swelling in the leg(s)

Exercises should be completed 3 times a day. Repeat each exercise 5 times

Exercise 1:

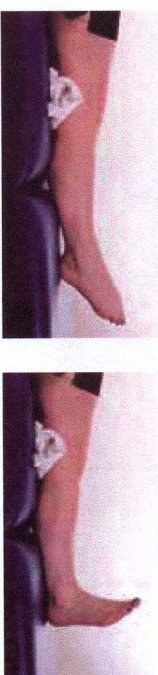
Bend ankle up and down as far as possible.



Exercise 2:

Sit or lie on your back with a straight leg, place a small towel under your knee.

Brace your knee into the towel and lift your heel off the bed.



Exercise 3:

Sit or lie on your back and gently try to slide your heel up towards your buttocks bending your knee.



Work: This will all depend on the type of job you do and if you will be receiving any further treatment. A basic rule is if you feel like returning to work you are ready. For sedentary type work you may feel ready to go back to work at six weeks but if you do a physically active job it will take longer. Your surgeon or physiotherapist will be able to advise you on this.

Sport/Leisure: Once your scars have healed and you have good movement you may begin swimming at six weeks. Most other leisure activities can be started within two or three months.

Sexual health/activity: Once your scars are healed you may resume sexual activity once you feel comfortable to do so.

If you have any questions or are unsure always ask your surgeon or physiotherapist.

Early Exercises: It is important to move and exercise your leg(s) gently following your operation. A physiotherapist will explain and demonstrate these exercises which will start around 2 days after the operation. These exercises are safe to perform even if you have drains, clips or stitches in place.

How often do I have to exercise?

These exercises should be performed 3 times a day. Repeat each exercise 5 times.

Leg stiffness and tightness can occur long after surgery or if you go on to have radiotherapy. It is important to continue doing these exercises until you have regained the range of movement you had before your operation.

What should I feel when performing these exercises?

It is normal to feel a stretching sensation and slight discomfort when performing these exercises especially on the operated side. This feeling should ease as you repeat your exercises. It may be advisable for you to take some painkillers 30 minutes before you start to exercise. However, if you start having pain or further discomfort seek medical advice.

What problems might I encounter following my surgery?

Scarring: Your operation will leave a scar which may initially feel uncomfortable and tight when you move your leg. This will ease as you repeat your exercises and continue to stretch this area.

Once your wound has healed fully, it is important to massage moisturising cream, for example Double base or E45 cream on and around the scar area to keep it soft and flexible. This can also change the appearance of the scar.

Sensation: It is quite common to experience numbness or tingling down the front and inside of your thigh. This usually improves after a few months but in some people it does persist and can be permanent.

Swelling: Whilst some swelling after surgery is to be expected, the removal of the deep lymph glands from your groin means that your body has to adapt to this change. Usually your body will adapt to this change; however, sometimes residual swelling can occur, this is called Lymphoedema. Unlike other oedemas, Lymphoedema can lead to changes in the tissue such as fibrosis (hardness) and an increased risk of infection.

What is the role of the lymph nodes?

Lymph nodes, which are sometimes referred to as lymph glands, are a number of very small rounded or bean shaped nodules which are situated superficially under the skin and in deeper areas of the body. They are located in many places around the body, for example in the arm pit, neck and groin. The lymph node acts as a filter and plays an important part in the immune system (fighting infection) and also helps carry away any excess tissue fluid which drains back into the blood circulation.

If I do have residual swelling, what should I do?

If you have swelling that is not resolving please inform your doctor, physiotherapist or nurse and they can advise you appropriately.

In the meantime follow the steps below to minimise your swelling:

1. Moisturise your affected leg(s) on a daily basis
2. Exercise gently and regularly
3. Keep your legs elevated when sitting down

When can I return to normal activities?

After six weeks your scar should be healed and you should be able to move quite comfortably. You need to increase the amount of walking and exercise you do gradually until you are moving more or less normally.

There are no hard and fast rules as to when you can return to work, sports or hobbies. People heal differently and have differing amounts of energy.

Remember to progress activities slowly and listen to your body.

Walking: Is a good exercise to maintain or improve health after an operation and short daily walks when you get home will help.

Driving: You must not drive until you have full control of a vehicle. This will usually take around six weeks. Do not drive unless you are well, alert and are able to take emergency action. It is advisable to check with your insurance company before you start driving.