

Post-surgery pneumonia prevention

Your comfort and recovery are our priority, and protecting your lungs is an important part of healing after surgery. Because you move less after surgery and anesthesia can make your breathing shallower, your lungs may not get as much oxygen as usual. This can raise the risk of problems such as pneumonia, especially if you have asthma, COPD or a history of smoking.

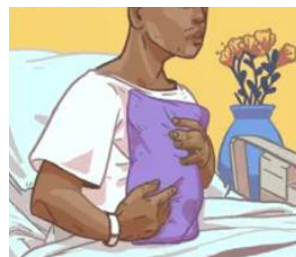
One of the simplest ways to keep your lungs healthy is by coughing. Coughing helps you take deeper breaths, expand your lungs and clear out mucus that can build up after anesthesia. If you have chest or abdominal surgery, coughing may feel uncomfortable, but gently holding a pillow against your incision can help. Taking any prescribed pain medication and waiting about an hour for it to take effect can make coughing and using the pillow more comfortable.

How to brace your incision when coughing after surgery

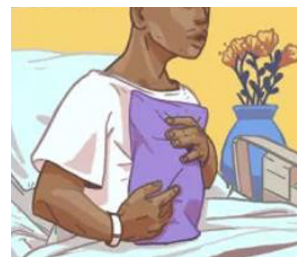
For the first two to three days after your procedure, try to sit up, breathe deep and cough every hour, if advised by your care team. It's a good idea to continue these exercises until you return to your normal activities.



Apply gentle but firm pressure.



Take your hands or a small pillow and hug to incision.



For an abdominal incision, tense the stomach muscles slightly while applying pressure.

Deep breathing exercises

Taking time for deep breathing helps keep your lungs clear and lowers your risk of pneumonia after surgery. Every hour, try to take 10 deep breaths using these steps:

1. Find a comfortable position.
2. Take a deep breath through your nose, feeling your chest expand fully.
3. Hold the breath for five seconds.
4. Slowly breathe out through pursed lips, as if you were blowing out a candle.
5. Rest between breaths if you get lightheaded.

| Post-surgery pneumonia prevention (continued)

Coughing exercises

Coughing helps clear mucus from your lungs and lowers your risk of pneumonia after surgery. Every hour, try the following:

1. Find a comfortable position.
2. Take a few deep breaths to relax, feeling your chest fully expand.
3. Cough firmly and focus on clearing all the air out of your chest.
4. Use a tissue to clear any mucus in your mouth.
5. Repeat several times, until there is no mucus coming up.

If you experience any of the following signs or symptoms of pneumonia, please seek medical attention immediately:

- Chest pain when you breathe or cough
- Confusion or changes in mental awareness (adults age 65 and older)
- Recurring cough, which may produce phlegm
- Fatigue
- Fever, sweating and shaking (chills)
- Lower than normal body temperature (adults older than age 65 and patients with weak immune systems)
- Shortness of breath

References

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