

FACTSHEET

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Physiotherapy for children after heart surgery

Children who have had heart surgery often need chest physiotherapy to help prevent and reduce lung complications.

The anaesthetic and the operation itself may result in the lungs making more secretions than usual. After the surgery, your child may experience some pain and will also be less active than normal. These two factors may make it more difficult for your child to take deep breaths and cough effectively and to start moving normally again.

Physiotherapy will also help your child move safely after surgery.

After surgery

A physiotherapist will review your child after their operation. Whether they are still on the breathing machine (ventilator) or breathing by themselves, the physiotherapist will be checking that the lungs are clear of secretions. The physiotherapist will give age appropriate techniques to help clear the secretions from the lungs and to help increase the air going to the lungs. These techniques may include positioning, chest percussion, deep breathing exercises and coughing.

It is very important that children start moving soon after their operation and the physiotherapist will help your child with sitting out of bed and if they are old enough, start walking in the first couple of days after surgery.

A physiotherapist will continue to see your child until physiotherapy is no longer needed. This is usually three to five days but will vary depending on how your child's lungs were before the operation, the type of operation

that your child has had and how your child progresses after the operation.

It is often very helpful for your child's recovery if you can encourage them to do some of the physiotherapy techniques including sitting out of bed and walking if appropriate when the physiotherapist is not there. Your physiotherapist will advise you on what to do.

If physiotherapy is still needed when it is time for you to go home, the physiotherapist will teach you how to do the techniques before you leave hospital.

Remember:

- Getting your child moving and performing chest physiotherapy is an important part of recovery after surgery.
- You can help by encouraging your child to do the exercises and breathing activities.
- If you have any questions please ask the physiotherapist looking after your child.