

Fact Sheet

Physiotherapy for children before & after heart surgery

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

Why?

The anaesthetic and the operation itself sometimes result in the lungs making more secretions than usual. After the surgery your child will be less active than normal. These factors may result in them being unable to take a deep breath and cough effectively to clear the secretions.

After surgery

A physiotherapist will come and see your child the day after the operation if stable. 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. They may use techniques such as chest percussion and vibrations to help clear the secretions. Suction may be used to remove the extra secretions from the lungs if they are unable to cough well enough.

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 your child to do some of the physiotherapy techniques when the physiotherapist is not there. Your physiotherapist will advise you on what to do.

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

Remember

- Chest physiotherapy is an important part of recovery following 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.



This fact sheet is for education purposes only.
Please consult with your doctor or other health professional
to make sure this information is right for your child.

This document was reviewed on Thursday, 3rd August 2006.

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