



Abdominal & core recovery programme

Helping you to recover,
one step at a time

Recovery + Movement Programme

GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation



GREEN PHASE ONE

Abdominal & core recovery programme Foundation

GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

WHAT ARE THE AIMS?

- To enhance your recovery and get you back to your daily activities as soon as possible
- To rebuild your confidence and improve your general wellbeing after stoma surgery
- To help restore your mobility, co-ordination and balance
- To engage and strengthen your tummy muscles after abdominal surgery
- To reduce your risk of developing a parastomal hernia by strengthening your tummy muscles (see page 36 of the main recovery handbook)



It is imperative that you check with your stoma nurse, physiotherapist or surgeon before commencing this programme. Show them this booklet and ask them to support you through it.

With the approval of your surgeon, you should be able to start these recovery movements 3-7 days after your operation, or as soon as you feel ready.

Then continue when you are discharged and back home.

These moves are also ideal if you had surgery some time ago, but have never done any abdominal recovery exercises. Think of this phase as the foundation programme.

Safe Moving



Watch our video at www.convatec.co.uk/meplus on how to get in and out of bed safely.



Sit on the side of your bed and slowly lower yourself down sideways using your arm for support.



Then slowly bring your legs up to the bed one by one.



Lower yourself down so you're lying on your side, then roll over onto your back.



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

YOUR RECOVERY

These movements are appropriate for anyone who has just had major abdominal surgery.

They form a very important part of your early recovery after stoma surgery and everyone is advised to do them.

Do them very gently and listen to your body carefully. If you experience pain or an unexpected response then stop the movement and speak to your nurse or surgeon.

If your wounds have not healed properly or you have an infection, then please do not commence this programme and speak to your surgeon or stoma nurse about when you should start.

There are a number of movements in this programme; some of which

you can do lying in bed (or on the floor at home), others are done sitting in your chair or standing up.

Make sure you're safe and not at risk of falling when you do the movements and that your chair or bed is secure.

SAFE MOVING

After abdominal surgery it's very important to get in and out of bed in a safe way to avoid straining your abdominal area. Try to avoid 'sitting up' using your abdomen. Instead roll onto your side and push up sideways to a sitting position. To lie back down, lower yourself onto your side and then roll onto your back.

If you're getting up from and down onto the floor, try a similar technique and use a chair for support.

WATCH THE INSTRUCTIONAL VIDEOS FOR THESE MOVES AT www.convatec.co.uk/meplus

Your core muscles are very important, they support your spine and internal organs and are involved in every movement that you do.

Your 'core' is made up of abdominal muscles, but also muscles in your back and pelvic floor. Think of your 'core' as your inbuilt support.

During surgery to form a stoma, your abdominal muscles become weak and damaged, so it's very important to begin to gently strengthen them as soon as you can after surgery.

This will help your recovery, posture and confidence as well as reducing your risk of developing a parastomal hernia.

PLEASE NOTE: This programme has been developed in conjunction with nurses, physiotherapists, surgeons and stoma patients. All the movements are appropriate for someone who has had major abdominal surgery. If you have any questions about any of the movements, please speak to your nurse, surgeon, GP or physiotherapist. Always listen to your body and proceed with care. If you have any pain, discomfort or an unusual or unexpected response when doing the movements then please stop and seek medical advice.



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This is the very first and most important movement in the whole programme. It is the foundation for your entire recovery, helping you to reconnect and strengthen your core and tummy muscles. This can be done in bed or on the floor.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent and feet flat.
- **Gently place your hands** on your lower tummy.
- **Take a breath in** then as you slowly breathe out, try to tighten up your deep tummy muscles.
- **Imagine drawing your tummy** away from your hands and down towards your spine. You may feel the muscle under your hands tighten up.
- **You're aiming** to get a deep contraction of the muscle. Nothing should visibly move on the outside of your body. It is very subtle and gentle.
- **Hold this** gentle contraction for a slow count of 3-5 whilst continuing to breathe normally.
- **Then relax** and breathe away.
- **Repeat x 5**
- **Do this 2-3 times per day**

When you can successfully engage your tummy muscles, you can try the same technique in other

positions – such as when you're sitting or standing. Just get the feeling of gently tightening and pulling your tummy muscles toward your spine. Then you can repeat the movement many times during the day.

It's normal to find this hard just after surgery. But it's important to persevere and keep trying, you'll get there eventually. As you get stronger and more controlled, you'll be able to increase the intensity of the contraction and tighten with more strength.



POST OP
TIP

Just hold a very soft contraction for a second or two. Put a pillow under your head for comfort and just try to get a feeling of 'engagement' in your deep abdominal muscles.



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps you engage and strengthen your tummy muscles and can help with mobility of your lower back. This can be done in bed or on the floor.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent.
- **Relax** with a slight curve in your lower back – this is the neutral position.
- **Gently flatten** your lower back into the bed/floor, rocking your pelvis towards your chest.
- **At the same time** gently tighten your deep tummy muscles.
- **Try not to push** on your legs, just tilt the pelvis. You're simply taking the curve out of your lower back.
- **Hold this** position for a moment.
- **Then release** back to the neutral position and relax.
- **Repeat x 5**
- **Do this 2-3 times per day**
- **As you get stronger**, you'll be able to hold a stronger contraction and tilt/hold for a little longer.



POST OP TIP

Just tilt a very small amount. Put a pillow under your head for comfort and just try to get a feeling of engagement in your deep tummy muscles and a very gentle tilt of your pelvis.

Knee Rolls

3



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This helps you to connect with your tummy muscles during a simple movement and it begins to strengthen them. It also helps with mobility of your lower back and hips. You can do this in bed or on the floor.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent and feet together.
 - **Relax** and breathe normally.
 - **Then gently** tighten your deep tummy muscles as previously.
 - **Allow your knees** to gently roll over to one side but keep your shoulders flat on the floor. Keep your ankles together and allow your foot to lift.
 - **Only go over as far as is comfortable**, then come back to centre and allow your knees to drop over to the opposite side.
 - **This is a gentle rolling side-to-side action**, moving gently with control from one side to the other. You should feel your tummy muscles working gently as you roll your knees back up.
- **Keep your ankles and knees together** as you roll to each side.
 - **Repeat x 10**
 - **Do this 2-3 times per day**



POST OP TIP

You can do this on your bed. Put a pillow under your head for comfort and make sure you do it very gently. You may not be able to roll over very far to begin with, but that's fine. As you recover you'll be able to roll over a little further.

Seated Arm Raises

4



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move improves general mobility and requires you to use your core/tummy muscles as you raise your arms. It also helps to build your confidence in your ability to move around and lift your arms. This can be done sitting on the side of your bed or in a chair.

- **Sit on the side** of your bed or on your chair, making sure you're secure and safe with your feet firmly on the floor.
- **Relax and breathe** and place both hands on your knees.
- **Then gently tighten** your deep tummy muscles as previously.
- **Sit nice and tall** with good posture and imagine a balloon on the top of your head.
- **Slowly raise** one arm out in front of you – only go as high as you feel able. Keep your shoulder down and relaxed.
- **Replace your hand** on your knee and repeat with the opposite arm.
- **Continue to breathe** throughout and keep your tummy muscles engaged.

- **Repeat x 10 in total**
- **Do this 2-3 times per day**

TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

You can lift your arm a little higher, aiming to get your arm straight up above your head. To progress it further you can lift both arms together. Only progress the move when you feel comfortable.



**POST OP
TIP**

You can do this sitting on the side of your bed or on your chair. Initially just try out a small movement as you may feel it pull on your abdomen. As you begin to recover, you should be able to lift your arms higher.

Seated Knee Lifts

5



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move improves general core control and helps to build your confidence in your ability to move and lift your legs. It is a little more challenging than the other moves, so start very gently. You can do this sitting on the side of your bed or in a chair.

- **Sit on the side of your bed** or on your chair, making sure you're secure and safe with your feet firmly on the floor.
- **Sit towards** the front of the chair so your back is not supported. This makes the movement more effective.
- **Relax and breathe** and place both hands on your knees.
- **Sit nice and tall with good posture** – imagine a balloon lifting you up from the crown of your head.
- **Then gently tighten** your deep tummy muscles as previously.
- **Slowly lift one foot off the floor.** Only lift a small amount – only a few cm's to begin with. Keep your tummy muscles engaged throughout.
- **Replace your foot on the floor** and repeat on the other side – maintain control of your trunk and

don't allow any movement from side to side of your upper body.

- **Continue to breathe** normally throughout
- **Repeat x 10 in total**
- **Do this 2-3 times per day**

TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

Lift your foot a little higher and hold for a slow count of 3. Do this movement slowly with control.

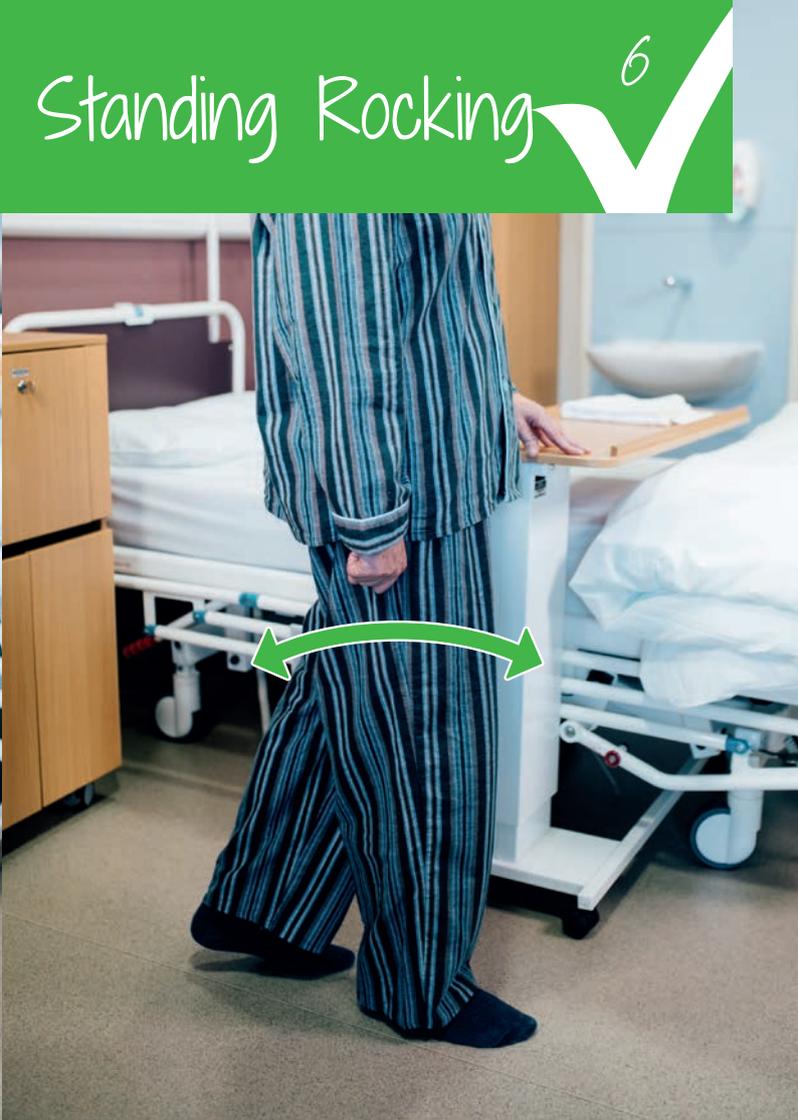


POST OP TIP

Initially just lift your foot a tiny amount from the floor. You may feel it pull on your abdomen, so start gently and see how it feels.

Standing Rocking

6



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move improves general core control, balance and mobility. This is a really important rehabilitation movement which helps to restore good core function.

- **Stand with your feet together**, as tall as you can and tighten your deep tummy muscles as previously.
- **Step forward** with one foot so that your heel is in line with the toes on your opposite foot.
- **Balance your weight** between both feet.
- **Keep your tummy** muscles engaged.
- **Slowly rock** forwards and backwards – transferring your weight from foot to foot.
- **Allow your heel** to lift as you rock forwards and the toe of the other foot to lift as you rock backwards.
- **This is a very gentle** balance and core engagement movement.
- **Aim to do** 10 rocking movements with good control.
- **Swap your feet** over and do 10 on the opposite side.
- **Do this 2-3 times per day**

TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

Try doing this movement without using a support and try closing your eyes.



POST OP TIP

Hold onto a chair, window ledge, kitchen counter or similar support when you first start this movement and make sure you're safe and supported

Supported Sit to Stand

7



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This is a simple movement which will help to restore strength in your legs. It improves balance and co-ordination and will help to rebuild your confidence, especially if you've been in bed a long time. Make sure you're safe and not at risk of falling. Have a support close to you which you can use to assist your balance during this movement.

- **Sit close to the front of your chair** or on the side of your bed with your feet firmly on the floor, feet should be shoulder distance apart or in an 'offset' position with one in front of the other.
- **Have something to support** you such as the arms of the chair or another support close by – this support is there to assist you, try not to 'pull' or 'push' yourself up. The support is only there for balance.
- **Try to use your legs** as much as you can in this movement.
- **First, gently tighten** your deep tummy muscles as previously.
- **Then slowly push** yourself up to standing, using your legs as much as possible, but with your support as needed. Use the arms of the chair for a little support, but try to avoid pushing down hard.
- **When standing**, stand tall - pause and take a breath.
- **Then slowly** (with control) lower yourself back down to sitting – try to use the muscles in your legs – try to avoid flopping back down without control and avoid pushing down on your support too much.
- **Take a breath**, and repeat.
- **Repeat x 5-10**
- **Do this 2-3 times per day**

Complete 4-6 weeks of Green Phase 1.

Practise the movements every day. When you feel ready move onto **Blue Phase 2**.

To get your copy of Phase 2 call our helpline on **0800 467 866**.



GREEN PHASE ONE: Foundation

Meet our models

The models used in the me+recovery programme are our me+ advocates and they both have stomas.

MARIA

is a runner and also enjoys cycling and triathlon.

DEREK

is a classical singer and enjoys walking and being active.

PROGRESSING FROM HERE?

Hopefully by now you should feel well on the road to recovery. Well done for following the programme and taking control of your health and recovery. You've done a great job.

YOU SHOULD BE FEELING:

**MORE CONFIDENT / STRONGER
FITTER AND MORE MOBILE / HEALTHIER
IN CONTROL OF YOUR RECOVERY**

But the good work doesn't stop now. To maintain good core control and strong tummy muscles it's important to keep moving and doing the movements in these programmes.

You can mix things up and pick various moves from the different programmes as you continue to progress. Try to do a few of the moves every day if you can – simply fit them into your day as you go about your life.

From here you can start to be more active, build up your exercise and keep fit and healthy.

For more support look for an exercise referral specialist or highly trained exercise instructor, group class or walking group.



We're here to help you

Reach out whenever you need insights, ideas or just someone to listen.

For more information visit www.convatec.co.uk/meplus

Or call **0800 467 866**

Freephone Nurse Advisor Line: **0800 085 2516**

Our friendly Stoma Care Nurse Advisor is just a phone call away



Royal College
of Nursing

RCN ACCREDITED