

Patient information factsheet

Surgical therapy emergency post-operative service (STEPS)

You have recently had emergency abdominal surgery. To help with your recovery, your doctor has referred you to the surgical therapy emergency post-operative service, known as 'STEPS'.

This factsheet explains what STEPS is, what the service offers and what to expect during your sessions with us. We hope this factsheet helps to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have any further questions or concerns, please speak to a member of the ward team caring for you.

Please note that this factsheet serves as a general guide and does not replace personalised medical advice.

What is the surgical therapy emergency post-operative service (STEPS)?

STEPS provides support to people who are recovering from emergency abdominal surgery. STEPS forms part of the wider surgical team at University Hospital Southampton NHS Foundation Trust (UHS).

The STEPS team is made up of a number of therapy technicians who carry out daily therapy sessions with you to help support you in your recovery. Sometimes this may include asking for additional support from other healthcare professionals, such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

Why have I been referred to STEPS?

We recognise that this may have been a challenging time for you, and now that your surgery is over, it is important to focus on your recovery.

Therapy plays an important role in aiding your recovery process, helping you to regain strength, mobility, and independence.

What does STEPS offer?

We offer:

- expert advice and support
- tailored exercises
- breathing exercises
- help with sitting in a chair and walking after your surgery
- assistance with washing, dressing and using the toilet

How can STEPS help me?

Working with STEPS can help to:

- speed up your recovery so that you can go home sooner
- reduce your risk of complications (for example, blood clots or a chest infection)
- improve your respiratory function (breathing)
- restore your range of movement
- regain your independence to perform daily activities
- build up your strength and endurance
- reduce your pain (some discomfort after surgery is normal but if it is affecting your breathing or movement, ask the nurse caring for you to review your pain relief medication)

It's important to note that everyone's journey is different after surgery. Our team will help you to progress in the early days of your recovery and make a tailored plan for you.

What will happen during a STEPS session?

Once you have moved to a surgical ward, a member of our STEPS team will visit you. During this first visit, we will ask you a number of questions so that we can get to know you (for example, what you like, dislike and if you have any hobbies). This information will then help us to tailor your recovery plan around you.

We will then visit you on the ward twice a day, Monday to Friday. During these sessions, we will:

- aim to get you moving as soon as possible, for example sitting in a chair or taking a few steps
- assess your physical ability and strength
- set realistic goals for you to achieve during your recovery period
- answer any questions you may have and provide support as needed

Once you have achieved your recovery goals, we will then discharge you from our service.

What can I do to help my recovery?

Taking an active role in your recovery process is very important. You can do this by:

- taking part in all your therapy sessions
- completing the exercises we give you on a regular basis
- staying active within your limits (gradually increase your activity levels as advised by your healthcare team)
- talking to us about any concerns you may have during your recovery

Please note that it is normal to not feel like your usual self while you recover. If you just need some fresh air and a chat with someone, please let us know and we can organise this.

Frequently asked questions

I keep seeing strange things and having odd dreams. Is that normal?

Many people experience vivid dreams and/or hallucinations after having surgery. These may be frightening or bizarre and you may find it difficult to tell the difference between your dreams and reality. These will usually settle after a period of days but can sometimes take months. If you have any concerns, ask your healthcare team.

Why am I not seeing progress every day?

It can be hard at times to see yourself making progress every day and this can cause some people to lose confidence. This is normal. If you have any concerns about your progress, ask your healthcare team.

Patient information factsheet

I don't understand what was done in my surgery. Can you explain?

Understanding your medical care can be confusing at times, especially when you are ill. If at any point you do not understand what is happening to you, speak to a member of your healthcare team who will be happy to find the right healthcare professional to explain this to you and your family.

Will I damage myself further if I move?

It is normal to feel tired and weak for two to three months after your surgery. Although it is important for you to rest when you are tired, you must not spend long periods of time in bed during the day. Walking is a good form of exercise to begin with. You can increase the distance you walk a small amount each day. Your feelings of tiredness will gradually improve with time, and you will become stronger.

You must **not** lift anything heavier than a full kettle of water for the first two to four weeks after your surgery. After this time, you can build up your strength and activity levels according to how you feel.

Your goals

Write down three goals in the table below that you'd like to achieve with the help of our team.

Goal one	
Goal two	
Goal three	

Patient information factsheet

Notes

Use the space below to write down any notes or any questions you'd like to ask us.

**Every STEP you take, no matter how small, will help improve your recovery.
Our team is here to support you every STEP of the way.**

Useful links

www.uhs.nhs.uk/Media/UHS-website-2019/Patientinformation/Respiratory/Tips-on-a-speedier-recovery-after-an-operation-751-PIL.pdf

www.icusteps.org

www.colostomyuk.org

If you are a patient at one of our hospitals and need this document translated, or in another format such as easy read, large print, Braille or audio, please telephone **0800 484 0135** or email **patientsupporthub@uhs.nhs.uk**

For help preparing for your visit, arranging an interpreter or accessing the hospital, please visit **www.uhs.nhs.uk/additionalsupport**

Join our family of charity supporters with a monthly donation! It's a wonderful way to show your ongoing support of our patients and staff.

Scan the QR code or visit southamptonhospitalscharity.org/donate



**Southampton
Hospitals
Charity**

Charity Registration Numbers 1051543

