

## Relaxation

This method can be effective for mild to moderate pain and boost the pain relief effects of drugs. There are no side-effects. This technique is best learnt before surgery.

1. Breathe in slowly and deeply.
2. As you breathe out slowly, feel yourself beginning to relax. Feel the tension leaving your body.
3. Now breathe in and out slowly and regularly, at whatever rate is comfortable for you.
4. To help you focus on your breathing. Breathe in as you say silently to yourself 'in, two, three'. Breathe out and say silently 'out, two, three' OR each time you breathe out say silently to yourself a word such as 'peace' or 'relax'.
5. You may imagine that you are doing this in a place that is very calming and relaxing for you, such as lying in the sun on a beach listening to the waves gently lapping the sand, or sitting in the garden with the wonderful aroma of the flowers around you.
6. Do steps 1 - 2 only once then repeat steps 3 and 4 for up to 20 minutes.
7. End with a slow deep breathe. As you breathe out say to yourself 'I feel alert and relaxed'.

## Other information

For the benefit of our patients, visitors and staff, Northampton General Hospital operates a smoke-free policy. This means that smoking is not allowed anywhere on the trust site, this includes all buildings, grounds and car parks.

Leaflets, information, friendly advice and support on giving up smoking and on nicotine replacement therapy are available from the local Stop Smoking helpline on 0845 601 3116, the free national helpline on 0800 169 689, e-mail: [smokefree@npct.northants.nhs.uk](mailto:smokefree@npct.northants.nhs.uk) and local pharmacies.

Car parking at Northampton General Hospital is extremely limited and it is essential to arrive early, allowing ample time for parking. Alternatively, you may find it more convenient to arrange to be dropped off and collected.

This information can be provided in other languages and formats upon request including Braille, audio cassette and CD. Please contact (01604) 544516 or the Patient Advice & Liaison Service (PALS) on (01604) 545784, e-mail: [Pals@ngh.nhs.uk](mailto:Pals@ngh.nhs.uk)

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# Coping with your pain whilst you are in hospital

Northampton  
General Hospital  
NHS Trust



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## Introduction

We hope the following information will be helpful to you. If you have any questions please ask a member of the nursing staff.

## Help yourself feel more comfortable and reduce your pain

- Ask for help when you need it
- Ask for pain relief as soon as the pain or discomfort starts. Don't wait for it to get really bad. It will help to have your pain relief regularly. You may even leave hospital sooner as a result
- Tell a nurse or doctor if you are in pain
- When you are using the more complex methods of pain relief: a morphine pump or an epidural, it is important you are given and take simple pain killers (paracetamol) as well as the strong pain killers
- If you have taken your pain killers and it still hurts too much to cough or move tell the nurses. You may need an extra dose or a different pain killer

- Ask for pain relief in plenty of time before you have to get up or have physiotherapy. This will help you cope better. If you have a PCA pump (morphine) press the button.
- If you cough (or laugh!) support any abdominal wound by placing a hand or pillow firmly over it. The nurse or physiotherapist can show you how to do this. Sometimes a heat pad will help
- Use your arms and legs to assist you as you move in bed
- Try to relax your body. Think about lying on a beach or listening to your favourite music, reading or any other distracting therapy. Enjoy a pleasant daydream. It may sound silly but this will help to ease the tension in your muscles which can make your pain worse
- Ask a relative or a friend to massage your hands and feet with baby lotion. This can be very relaxing

## Three key points in your recovery

- Try to take five deep breaths every hour. If pain stops you doing this ask for pain killers
- Try to cough. If you can't clear your chest because it hurts too much, ask for pain killers
- Make sure you can move without too much discomfort. If you get moderate to severe pain when you move, ask for painkillers

It may not be possible to get rid of pain altogether, but you should not be so bad that it stops you doing these things.

If your pain is effectively controlled, you will be able to breathe more deeply so you are at less risk of a chest infection. You will be able to get up and about more quickly, reducing the risk of deep vein thrombosis (blood clot in the leg). Good pain control will help you sleep better, improve your appetite when you are allowed to eat and reduce the effects of stress hormones, helping your body heal more quickly, and you leave hospital sooner.