



Zoe Birch is a Chartered Physiotherapist and founder of PhysioMotion, which operate a clinic at Green Park as well as providing physiotherapy at home. Zoe has been contributing great articles for a number of years now, for which we are very grateful. This time around she discusses pre-surgery physiotherapy.

WHY PHYSIO BEFORE SURGERY COULD QUICKEN YOUR RECOVERY

After surgery, it is standard practice for your surgeon to recommend physiotherapy to help with your recovery, with the surgeon telling you that you will be 'recovered' within six weeks.

But what the research states is that it will take you a full year to get back to YOUR full capacity and activities, and this could be longer if you have significantly reduced your activity levels prior to the surgery due to injury and/or pain restricting you.

At Physio Motion, we will often be asked to see patients prior to ACL or joint replacement surgery to optimise people's range of movement and muscle strength as well as getting them used to using crutches. Surgeons will strongly encourage it and your insurance companies should cover it, as pre-surgical rehabilitation is suggested on NICE guidelines (which most insurances will follow).

BUT WHY WOULD IT BENEFIT EVERYONE PRIOR TO ANY SURGERY?

1. Joint mobility:

After surgery your joints can get stiffer due to increased swelling in the area and body response to the 'trauma'. If you already have reduced range of movement prior to the surgery, your joint will get even stiffer and regaining the normal joint range of movement can take longer than the guidelines provided by your surgeon. Physiotherapy can help with improving your joint mobility prior to the surgery with manual therapy and mobility exercises.

2. Muscle strengthening:

With an injury to the joint or joint changes related to arthritis, you may have pain associated with this. This causes you to be less active and it results in muscle mass and strength loss. After the surgery, you are often recommended to be on



Pre-surgery physio can help your post-surgery recovery.

reduced activity levels to aid the recovery and restrict excessive swelling of the joint resulting in further muscle atrophy.

Therefore a tailored muscle strengthening programme prior to the surgery can maximise strength gains, address areas of weakness that will affect your recovery and also strengthen other areas of the body that may be used more due to the use of equipment, such as the arms with crutches. This will ensure that during your recovery you hit your post surgical goals and avoid other aches and pains!

3. Practising alternative mobility:

Sometimes after surgery you may be required to use equipment to aid your recovery or reduce the load or use of that limb. By seeing a physiotherapist beforehand, they can ensure that you have all the equipment you need, fit it correctly and ensure that you are able to use it with confidence. Additionally if you are not allowed to use a limb such as an arm in a sling or non weight-bearing through the leg, they can practise walking, stairs and dressing yourself with this limitation so that it doesn't come as a shock to you after the surgery.

4. Reducing swelling and improving circulation:

Swelling can be present prior to surgery and it will definitely will be there after the surgery. With the joint mobility and muscle strengthening exercises, this will help with managing the swelling and improving circulation. At your

physiotherapy appointment, they can also advise on equipment that can help with reducing swelling such as a GameReady that ices and compresses at the same time (without the mess of ice packs), and they should practise circulatory exercises that you can perform between your rehabilitation exercises.

5. Realistic goal planning:

Close to your operation date, the physiotherapist can assess your joint mobility, muscle strength and functional ability that will give them the opportunity to give you realistic timeframes and goals to aim for with your recovery - as long as you do your exercises! This will enable you to book your next holiday, plan a lunch date with your friends or tell your football team when you will be back to training.

Even though we have mainly spoken about joint, bone and muscle-related surgery, physiotherapy can also help prior and after organ related surgery by improving your general fitness within your constraints due to our medical knowledge and understanding.

So if you have a surgery planned or just sustained an injury that might need surgery, why not see a physiotherapist to optimise your recovery and also get an idea of the recovery process?

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