

LIPOABDOMINOPLASTY EXERCISE PROTOCOL

Core Abdominal Exercises to Begin *Before* Surgery

Building core abdominal strength before surgery helps enhance muscle tone and improves post-operative outcomes. Without a good core tone, your results may be suboptimal.

Aim to complete the following exercises **daily, preferably before** surgery.

1. Pelvic Tilt – Core Activation

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Gently tilt your pelvis so your lower back flattens slightly, just allowing a hand to slide underneath. Activate your core by lightly engaging your pelvic floor muscles and drawing your tummy button towards your spine. This is a **gentle contraction** that forms the starting position for all exercises that follow.



2. Bent Knee Fall Out

From the pelvic tilt position:

Slowly let one knee drop out to the side in a controlled movement. Maintain a stable pelvis and engage your abdominal muscles. Return the leg to the centre, then repeat on the opposite side.

Repeat 5–10 times each side.



3. Heel Dips

Maintain your pelvic tilt.

Tighten your tummy muscles. Flex your foot and slowly straighten one leg, pushing your heel away. Keep your core tight as you return to the starting position.

Repeat 5–10 times each side.



4. Dead Bug

From the same starting position, straighten your right leg and simultaneously raise your right arm overhead. Keep your core engaged and return to the start position.

Repeat 5–10 times each side.

5. Leg Circle

Start with one leg bent and the other straight. Keeping your pelvis stable and tummy tight, slowly circle the straight leg from the hip. The larger and slower the circle, the harder the exercise.

Repeat 5–10 times each leg.



6. Crunch (Mini Ab Curl)

Lie on your back with your knees bent and feet flat on the floor. Place your hands on your thighs. Engage your core, tuck your chin to your chest. Slowly slide your hands up your thighs, lifting your head and shoulders slightly. Return with control.

Repeat 5–10 times.



Exercises After Surgery (Weeks 0–6)

Following your operation, it's normal to experience stiffness and discomfort in your abdominal area, especially when moving. This is part of the normal healing process.

Initially, you will be nursed slightly flexed with your knees bent. As your comfort improves, it's important to **gradually return to an upright posture over the first two weeks.**

Once home, gently increasing your activity will help improve your posture, circulation, and overall function.

Breathing Exercises

These exercises are essential for preventing chest infections and maintaining healthy lung function, especially when mobility is reduced.

1. Deep Breathing

Breathe in slowly and deeply through your nose, expanding your lungs as fully as possible. Hold the breath for 2–3 seconds. Exhale gently through your mouth.

Repeat 5 times every 30 minutes.

2. Basal Expansion (Incentive Spirometry)

Use your incentive spirometer as instructed by your physiotherapist.

Aim for 5 full breaths every 30 minutes.

3. Supported Coughing / Huffing

To protect your abdominal wound when coughing, bend your knees up and support your abdomen using your arms or a soft item (e.g., a pillow or folded towel).

A short, sharp breath out (called a “huff”) may be enough to clear secretions with less strain than a full cough.

Lymphatic Drainage Exercise

Helping your body manage swelling and bruising after surgery:

- Lie on your back with your knees bent.
- Gently engage your core by drawing your navel towards your spine and pressing the small of your back against the bed.
- This gentle contraction supports lymphatic flow, aiding in the removal of excess fluid and toxins, and accelerating healing.

Do 5 contractions every 30 minutes.

💧 Drink half a glass of water after each session to support drainage.

Manual Lymphatic Drainage (MLD)

This specialised massage technique can significantly reduce swelling and improve comfort.

Recommended schedule (after your first dressing check):

- Week 1: 3 sessions

- Week 2: 2 sessions
- Week 3: 1 session
- Then weekly as needed

You can book MLD at our clinic or through a qualified specialist near your home. Visit www.mlduk.org.uk to find a certified practitioner.

Circulatory Exercises

These simple movements help improve blood flow and reduce the risk of blood clots while your activity is limited:

1. Wiggle your toes
2. Point and flex your feet – Pull your feet towards you, then point them away
3. Knee bends – Gently bend and straighten each knee in turn
4. Thigh squeezes – Push your knees gently down into the bed, hold for 3 seconds, then relax
5. Bottom squeezes – Tighten your buttock muscles, hold for 3 seconds, then relax
6. Finger flexes – Bend and straighten your fingers
7. Elbow movements – Bend and straighten your elbows

Try to complete these exercises regularly throughout the day.

Getting In and Out of Bed

Bend your knees and brace your abdominal muscles. Log roll onto your side. Use your arms to push yourself up into a seated position while letting your legs gently drop off the bed.



Posture After Surgery

You may experience tightness across your abdomen, causing you to stoop forward when standing or walking – this is normal and will gradually improve. By **2 weeks post-op**, most patients can stand upright comfortably.

While sitting, take a moment to stretch your back to prevent muscle cramps from a stooped posture.

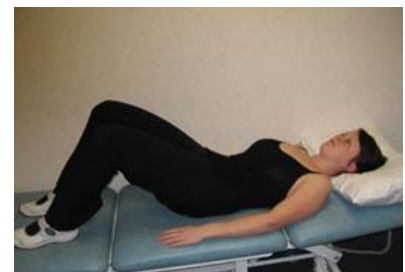


Post-Op Abdominal Exercises – Starting from Day 2

1. Pelvic Tilts

Lying on your back with knees bent and arms by your sides, gently pull your tummy button down towards your spine, pressing the small of your back against the bed.

Repeat 10 times.



2. Knee Rolls

Lying on your back, with your knees together and bent, slowly roll your knees from side to side while keeping your upper body still.

Repeat 10 times each side.

Practice both exercises three times daily.

Discharge Advice

- Follow-Up: Your first dressing check will be in 1 week.
- Rest & Support: It's normal to feel very tired when you return home. Take it easy, and don't hesitate to ask for help.
- Breathing Exercises: These can be stopped after 2 weeks.
- Walking: Begin gentle walking from week 3. Try engaging your core muscles as you walk.
- Driving: May resume from week 3, provided you feel confident and can perform an emergency stop. Start with short journeys.
- Work: You may return to work from week 3, depending on the physical demands of your job.
- Lifting: There are no strict rules. Start light (e.g., lifting a small baby) and increase gradually from week 3. Always brace your core muscles before lifting.



Exercises from Weeks 6–12 Post-Surgery

Return to your pre-operative exercises, focusing on rebuilding strength and control.

1. **Pelvic Tilt** – as described above.



2. **Bent Knee Fall Out** – control the movement, keeping hips stable.



3. **Heel Dips** – slowly straighten the leg and return to the starting position.



4. Dead Bug – alternate arm and leg extension.

5. Leg Circles – large, slow circles to increase difficulty.



6. Bridge - Lie on your back with your knees bent. Curl your pelvis inwards and slowly lift your spine off the floor, one vertebra at a time, until your hips are raised in a bridge position. Reverse the movement to return to the start.

Repeat each exercise 5–10 times, once or twice daily.



Three Months Post-Surgery

Your consultant will review you. If there are no concerns, you will be advised to gradually return to all pre-operative activities and exercise routines.

Pilates is highly recommended for maintaining and further improving abdominal tone.

Please follow all instructions carefully to ensure a smooth recovery and optimal aesthetic result.

If you have any doubts or concerns, please contact your care team.