



Preoperative Exercise  
Patient Information Leaflet  
*For adult patients undergoing  
major surgery*

## **Exercise is medicine!**

There is no doubt that having surgery asks a lot of your body and organ systems. In the same way that you can train your body before running a race or playing sport in order to perform better, there is evidence that taking part in exercise prior to major surgery will help you avoid complications and recover faster.

You are most likely to benefit from preoperative exercise if you are planning to undergo major surgery and:

- Are over the age of 70
- Are undergoing chemo or radiotherapy as part of your treatment before or after surgery
- You have other chronic health conditions such as diabetes, high blood pressure or sleep apnoea that may put you at increased risk of postoperative complications.

## **How much exercise is enough?**

This will vary from person to person. National recommendations suggest:

- At least 150 mins per week of moderate intensity exercise (see Fig. 1).
- Participating in regular activities (at least twice a week) that improve muscle strength and balance (Fig. 1).

## **Some important points:**

- Start gently with 10-15 min sessions and build up to the recommended level.
- Aim to get lightly out of breath but exercise sensibly and stop if you feel unwell.

Figure 1.



Figure 2.



- Listen to your body – if you experience new symptoms while exercising, stop and consult your doctor.
- Combine exercise with healthy living
  - Reduced alcohol intake
  - Stopping smoking
  - Healthy eating
- Some exercise may need to be modified for your medical issues. If you have any concerns please consult your anaesthetist or preassessment nurse and they will be able to advise you.