



answers  
recovery series

# Abdominal & Core Recovery Series



BLUE PHASE TWO: Making Progress



# SAFE MOVING



Sit on the side of your bed and slowly lower yourself down sideways using your arm for support.



Then slowly bring your legs up to the bed one by one.



Lower yourself down so you're lying on your side, then roll over onto your back.



*The materials in this booklet are adapted from the me+ recovery nurse training course which is RCN (Royal College of Nursing) and ACPGBI (Association Coloproctology GB and Ireland) accredited in the UK and have undergone extensive peer and expert review.*

*Peer Reviewed by: Prof Sina Dorudi, Consultant Colorectal Surgeon, Mike Grice, Osteopath, Lecturer Sports Therapy and Module Leader for Athletic Movement Analysis, Dr Iseult Wilson, Institute of Nursing and Health Research*

**The information in this handbook is not intended to provide medical advice. You should speak with your health care professional before engaging in physical activity following ostomy surgery. In the event you experience pain or discomfort, stop the activity immediately and contact your health care professional.**

When you've been working through Green Phase 1 for a few weeks and you feel confident with the moves, you're ready to move onto **Blue Phase 2**, with your health care professional's permission.

There is no set timeframe for how long to spend on each phase. Much will depend on your condition, recovery and previous well-being. Only progress when you are ready and can complete all of the Green Phase 1 moves easily and comfortably.

- Blue Phase 2 forms the main ongoing recovery and movement program. It is designed for people who have had major abdominal surgery and the formation of a stoma. There are 12 moves in total but you do not have to do them all.
- Simply choose the ones you feel most comfortable with. You could pick 3-4 moves and vary them throughout the week.
- Just try to make sure you do something every day – little and often is best.
- Of course if you want to do them all every day then that's fine, just listen to your body and rest when you need to.

- In the event you experience pain or discomfort, stop the activity immediately and contact your health care professional.

#### **STANDING ALTERNATIVES**

- If you find it hard to get onto the floor or you can't kneel, try doing the lying moves in bed, or just choose standing or sitting moves.

#### **GETTING DOWN ONTO THE FLOOR**

- If you want to do some of these moves on the floor, make sure you get down onto the floor and back up safely to avoid straining your abdomen.

- Avoid 'sitting up' hard or pulling on your abdomen.
- Use a chair or bed as support and get down onto the floor in a step by step fashion, kneeling first, then onto your hands and knees and slowly over onto your back.
- If you can't easily get on and off the floor or you've had a knee replacement which prevents you from kneeling, try doing the moves on a firm bed or try some of the moves from the Blue Standing Series instead.

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# 1 | CORE CONNECT WITH KNEE DROPS



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move continues to develop core/abdomen strength and control from Green Phase 1. You can do this in bed or on the floor.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent, and feet flat on the floor/bed.
  - **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
  - **Hold this contraction** while continuing to breathe normally.
  - **Then (keeping your knee bent) slowly allow** one knee to drop out to one side then slowly return it to center.
  - **Only go as far as you can.** As soon as you feel that you start to lose control of your pelvis, bring your knee back to center.
  - **Keep your pelvis** very stable and try to avoid any movement.
- **The goal** is NOT to see how low you can get your knee, it is more important to do this with perfect control, even if you just move a small amount.
  - **Then repeat** with the opposite leg.
  - **REPEAT 10X IN TOTAL ON EACH SIDE**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

## 2 | CORE CONNECT WITH LEG SLIDES



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps you become stronger and gain more control of your abdominal and core muscles. You'll develop good control while moving your leg which is an important progression.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent.
- **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
- **Hold this contraction** - while continuing to breathe normally.
- **Then slowly straighten** your leg, sliding your heel along the floor/bed away from you.
- **Keep your stomach** muscles tight and maintain control.
- **Pull your leg back** in and repeat on the other side. Keep the movement slow and controlled.

- **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES WITH EACH LEG**
- **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

### TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

As you progress and get stronger, you can allow your heel to lift away from the floor a little as you straighten your leg. Make sure you can slide your heel along the floor first, before you try to lift it.

## 3 | **SINGLE** KNEE CIRCLES



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps you get stronger, gain more control and is important for posture and abdominal strength.

- **Lie on your back** and carefully bring your knees - one at a time – up to your chest.
- **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
- **Place your hands** on your kneecaps, relax your shoulders and breathe normally.
- **Keeping your abdominal** muscles contracted, make a VERY slow controlled small circle with your right knee.
- **Don't allow your body to move.** Keep everything controlled and still. The only thing moving is your knee.

- **Try and get the movement** as perfect as you can. This will usually take a lot of concentration. As soon as you feel loss of control simply make the circles smaller or take a rest.
- **REPEAT 5X AND THEN DO 5 IN THE OPPOSITE DIRECTION. THEN CHANGE LEGS.**
- **When you've completed the movement,** carefully return your feet to the floor one at a time.

### • DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY

### TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

As you get stronger you'll be able to make bigger circles. Make sure that your body doesn't move or rock from side to side.



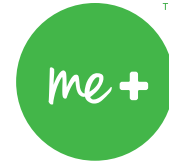
TIP

Use a pillow or cushion under your head for comfort.



## 4 | HIP LIFT BRIDGE





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## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps you gain more core control and strength, and also helps with mobility for your lower back. This can be done in bed or on the floor.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent.
- **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
- **Gently flatten your lower back** into the floor, tilting your pelvis towards your chest. As your pelvis tilts your bottom will start lifting up off the floor.
- **Continue to lift your bottom** (vertebrae by vertebrae) until you're in a 'bridge' position with your bottom lifted. Only go as high as you feel comfortable.
- **Avoid pressing** through your legs or arms.
- **Keep the movement** very slow and controlled.

- **Hold the position at the top** – tighten your stomach muscles again and then slowly lower back to the floor – keeping the muscles engaged the whole time. It is important to keep control of the movement and to keep breathing normally throughout.
- **When your bottom** is back on the floor, allow your abdominal muscles to relax completely and breathe normally, then repeat.

• **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES**

• **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

### TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

Simply lift a little higher and focus on tightening your deep abdominal muscles more strongly.



## 5 | **BEND** AND STRETCH



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move will help to release the tightness in your legs and lower back and allow you to move more freely. This is a great move to do in the kitchen when you're waiting for something to finish cooking.

- **Place your hands** on the seat of a chair (if you find this too low, then start with your hands on the back of the chair or on the kitchen counter).
- **Have your toes** facing forwards and legs straight – feet should be shoulder distance apart.
- **Slowly push your bottom** backwards (away from your hands) until you feel a 'tension' down the backs of your legs. Hold this for a moment.
- **Then gently bend your knees** slightly (to remove the 'tension') and then slowly straighten them again ('to bring the tension back on').
- **Repeat this movement** gently and with control in a fluid fashion.

• **REPEAT 10-15X**

• **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

## 6 | SITTING SQUEEZES



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

After surgery and extensive bed rest, it's common for your bottom muscles to become weak and to 'switch off'. This can affect your posture and cause back pain. It's important to get these muscles working well again.

This move is a really simple technique you can do any time of the day. Try it when traveling, sitting at your desk or watching TV.

- **Sit nice and tall** on a hard chair with your feet on the floor.
- **Tighten your bottom** muscles by clenching your bottom cheeks firmly together.
- **You should feel** that you lift up off the chair.
- **Don't press with your legs** – it's just your bottom muscles doing the work.
- **Hold for a count** of 2 and then release – and repeat.

- **REPEAT 10X**
- **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

### TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

Hold the 'squeeze' for longer or increase the intensity of the 'clench' or increase the number of repetitions to 15-20.



If you feel any rectal discomfort during this exercise, just stop and wait a few days before trying again.



## 7 | ROTATIONS



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

It's very common to feel stiff in your mid-back after surgery. This move helps to release tension and encourages your spine to move normally.

This is a really nice move to do at any time of the day. Try it sitting on the side of your bed in the morning when you first get up, or after any period of time sitting or lying.

- **Sit upright** nice and tall on a chair or the side of your bed.
  - **Clasp your hands together** and place them under your chin. Keep your arms tucked in at your ribs/waist.
  - **Keep your shoulders down** and relaxed and your bottom fixed on the chair.
  - **Slowly rotate** through your spine to one side until you feel you can't go any further. It's a bit like a corkscrew.
- **Keep your pelvis** fixed in position and try to rotate through your mid back.
  - **Then switch** and rotate to the other side.
  - **Keep this fluid rotating movement** going as you slowly repeat it from side to side.
  - **START WITH 10 AND BUILD UP TO DOING 20-30 REPETITIONS**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

## 8 | SELF MASSAGE TECHNIQUE LOWER BACK & BOTTOM



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

It's normal to have a lot of tightness and stiffness around your lower back, bottom and hips after surgery. Using a massage ball or tennis ball to 'self massage' is a very simple yet effective way to release the tightness. You can use the massage ball in any area of your body such as your shoulders, upper back and chest. Ask a friend or partner to help you.

You can do this move in 2 different ways:

### BALL ON WALL TECHNIQUE

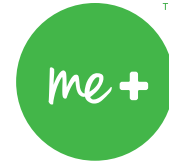
- **Position a massage ball** (tennis ball will do, but preferably some sort of specific massage ball which is firmer) between your bottom and the wall.
- **Position your legs wide** and knees bent – with your feet a little way from the wall. Make sure you're safe and can't slip.
- **Gently press** the ball into the wall with your bottom muscles. Slowly move from side to side and up and down to massage any tight or sore areas.

- **Hunt out 'tight spots'** where you might feel more tender. When you find one, hold the pressure on that point for 10 seconds.
- **Remember** to keep breathing and stay relaxed.
- **YOU CAN DO THIS ANY TIME AND AS OFTEN AS YOU WISH. AIM TO DO 1-2 MINUTES OF MASSAGE ON EACH SIDE.**



## 8 | SELF MASSAGE TECHNIQUE LOWER BACK & BOTTOM





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## BALL ON FLOOR TECHNIQUE

### Lower Back

- **Lie flat on your back** with knees bent.
- **Place a tennis ball** (or massage ball) in the muscles of your lower back – right in the gap between your ribs and pelvis.
- **Simply relax** onto the ball and allow the pressure to release the tension in the muscles. Breathe and relax.
- **You can gently move around** in small circles or from side to side to allow the ball to massage the muscles of your back. Or try to hold the ball in position and pull your knee into your chest.
- **TRY THIS FOR 1-2 MINUTES ON EACH SIDE OF YOUR BACK DAILY**

### Hips/Bottom Muscles

- **You can also use the massage ball** into your bottom muscles in the same way.
- **Lie on your side** propped up on your elbow.
- **Position the ball** in the side of your hip or bottom muscles.
- **Simply sit/lie on the ball** (in a side lying position) and allow the ball to massage the tight areas.
- **You'll feel** where you need it most.
- **Relax and breathe** and gently move it around working through the 'hot spots' of tightness.
- **TRY 1-2 MINUTES EACH DAY**



## 9 | **SLOW** MARCHING



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This is a movement to help with your coordination and balance.  
It helps to engage your core muscles and improves your muscle strength.

- **Stand with good posture** holding onto a chair or support.
- **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
- **Slowly peel** one foot off the floor lifting your knee and then the other knee in a slow marching action.
- **Only lift your feet** as high as you feel you can (you might only peel your toe off the floor to begin with).
- **Keep your pelvis stable** and abdominal muscles engaged throughout.
- **The key is** to maintain control and keep the move slow.

- **START WITH 10 SLOW MARCHES AND PROGRESS TO 20-30 AS YOU GET STRONGER.**

### HOW TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE?

You can progress this by lifting your knees higher. However, the most important thing is to ensure you keep your core muscles engaged and avoid too much 'side to side' movement or wobbling.

If you feel like you're wobbling or become unstable, then make the marching movement smaller.

# 10 | PELVIC TILT IN STANDING



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move strengthens your deep abdominal muscles and can help with lower back mobility. It's an easy move to fit into your day as you can do it standing up. Try it when you're watching TV.

- **Place your hands** on a table or kitchen work surface.
  - **Have your feet** slightly apart and bend your knees a little.
  - **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously. Breathe normally.
  - **Tuck your bottom under** - rounding out your lower back. This is a very gentle pelvic tilt.
  - **Tighten your stomach** muscles again, then release your pelvis back to a neutral position and relax.
- **This movement** is VERY small and very gentle.
  - **Think subtle**, slow, controlled and gentle pelvic rocking movement. If you get any discomfort in your back during or after doing this exercise, then stop and do the pelvic tilt (lying down) move instead.
  - **REPEAT 10X**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

# 11 | CALF RAISES



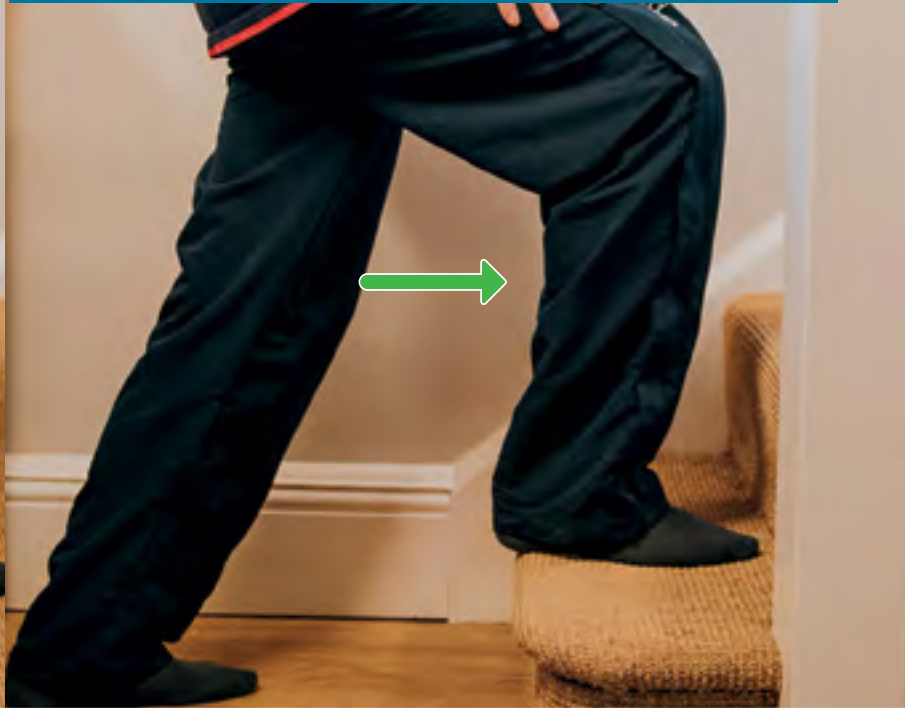
## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps with balance, coordination and core control. It also helps develop strength in your calf muscles (which are often weak after bed rest) and helps with circulation.

This can be done any time of the day. Try it while you're watching TV.

- **Stand upright** as tall as you can, and hold onto a chair or other support.
  - **Then gently tighten** your deep stomach muscles as previously.
  - **Slowly raise up onto your toes** – imagine a balloon on top of your head is pulling you up to the ceiling.
  - **Lower back down** so your heels are on the floor and repeat.
- **Keep your legs straight** without bending your knees.
  - **You'll feel your calf muscles** working as you do this.
  - **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES (BUILD UP TO 20)**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

## 12 | **HIP** STRETCH



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

It's very common for the muscles in the front of your hips and thighs to become tight after surgery. This can lead to lower back pain and discomfort in the pelvis and hips. This is a nice fluid 'release' movement which will help to release any tightness. Try this any time of the day.

- **Place one foot** on a low step or seat of a chair.
  - **Keep your other leg relaxed** behind you with your toes facing forward.
  - **From this position**, simply 'tuck' your pelvis under so you feel a stretch on the front of your thigh. Hold that position.
  - **From here slowly lunge forward** (bending your front knee) maintaining the pelvic tuck position.
- **You should feel** an increasing (but gentle) stretch through the front of your hip and thigh of your straight leg.
  - **Return to your start** position and repeat.
  - **It's a very gentle, subtle movement.** Try to do this as a flowing dynamic mobility movement rather than holding a static stretch position.
  - **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES ON EACH SIDE**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

**Try to continue doing these moves as part of your everyday 'movement' plan as you progress through your recovery.**

Try to include 2-3 moves every day and alternate them to suit your lifestyle and activities. Choose the movements you feel are the most effective for you.

If you wish, you can progress to Purple Phase 3 which involves more challenging movements. But ensure you feel strong and comfortable with Blue Phase 2 - and have been doing the program for many weeks before progressing.





# MEET OUR MODELS

The models used in the me+™ recovery series are part of our me+ community and they both have an ostomy.

**Maria** is a runner and also enjoys cycling and triathlon.

**Derek** is a classical singer and enjoys walking and being active.

## Progressing from here?

Hopefully by now you should feel well on the road to recovery. Congratulations for following the program and taking control of your health and recovery. You've done a great job.

**YOU SHOULD BE FEELING:**

**MORE CONFIDENT / STRONGER  
FITTER AND MORE MOBILE / HEALTHIER  
IN CONTROL OF YOUR RECOVERY**

But the good work doesn't stop now. To maintain good core control and strong abdominal muscles it's important to keep moving and doing the movements in this series.

You can mix things up and pick various moves from the different phases as you continue to progress. Try to do a few of the moves every day if you can – simply fit them into your day as you go about your life.

From here you can start to be more active, build up your exercise and keep fit and healthy.

For more support look for an exercise referral specialist or highly trained exercise instructor, group class or walking group.





**Getting the benefits of me+™ is easy.**

Simply call 1-800-465-6302 or visit [convatec.ca/ostomy](http://convatec.ca/ostomy)