

Enhanced Recovery Programme (ERP)

Enhanced recovery is a programme to help patients get better much more quickly after surgery, with reduced complications and an improved experience of their care.

This was originally designed for bowel surgery (colorectal surgery) to help patients get back to normal more quickly after an operation. It challenged traditional practice from pre-surgery through to discharge. The key is using clinical evidence to make changes, to the procedures, the actions of staff and to keep things as normal as possible for the patient. It is now being used for surgery for several types of cancer.

Measures include making sure patients are as fit as possible before they have an operation, and checks to ensure they are well enough for surgery. This helps reduce the risk of any complications. It is also important to understand the patient's expectation of surgery and how they will be cared for afterwards.

Wherever possible, we try to admit patients on the day of surgery so they don't have to wait in hospital beforehand. We work to ensure that patients are given the right nutritional support and hydration, to help them recover and support them after surgery.

Other measures we look at include choosing the most appropriate type of anaesthetic, using minimal access surgery (sometimes referred to as keyhole surgery or laparoscopy), keeping the use of drains and catheters to a minimum and removing them as quickly as medically appropriate. The aim is to get patients back to normal, reduce the risk of complications and the need for a longer recovery time.

Effective pain control is very important and we also work with patients to get them moving as early as possible. This reduces the risk of complications such as blood clots and helps us identify which patients need additional support, such as physiotherapy at an early stage when it is most effective.

These measures help patients recover more quickly and comprehensively. With patient agreement, they can leave hospital at an earlier stage, reducing complications and improving the whole experience of hospital care.

This is now being implemented in the following specialties.

- Gynaecology – Hysterectomy: vaginal & abdominal
- Orthopaedics – Elective hip & knee joint replacements
- Urology – bladder resection & prostatectomies
- Surgery – Colectomy & excision of rectum.



