



answers  
recovery series

# Abdominal & Core Recovery Series

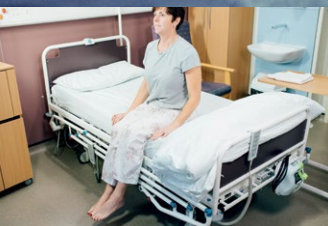
PURPLE PHASE THREE: Getting Fitter



# SAFE MOVING



Watch our video at [meplusrecovery.com](http://meplusrecovery.com) on how to get in and out of bed safely.



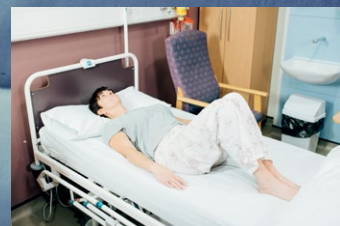
Sit on the side of your bed and slowly lower yourself down sideways using your arm for support.



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 Nursing) and ACPGGI (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.

If you've been working through Blue Phase 2 for some weeks and feel ready to progress, then you can move onto the movements in Purple Phase 3, with your health care professional's permission. You must be able to do all the movements in Phase 2 comfortably and confidently before progressing.

- You can continue to mix and match the moves from all the phases for as long as you wish.
- Think of each phase as a menu where you can pick and choose the exercises that feel right for you, and continue to do them when you can.
- Just try to make sure you do something every day – little and often is best.
- Remember that everyone will progress at different rates so it's important to listen to your body and only do what you feel ready to.
- Try to 'multi-task' the movements so you can do them while watching TV, when on the phone or while traveling or standing/sitting at your desk.

### 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.



Watch the instructional videos for these moves at [mepplusrecovery.com](https://mepplusrecovery.com)

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# 1 | THE BUG





## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps you develop more strength and control in your abdominal muscles and is a progression of earlier exercises from Phases 1 and 2. You can do this on the floor or on your bed. The key to this move is to do it with control and perfect technique.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent and arms straight above your chest.
  - **Then gently tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
  - **Slowly slide one leg out** along the floor (with your heel on the floor to begin with).
  - **At the same time**, lower your opposite arm above your head towards the floor/bed.
  - **Pause for a moment**, then bring them both back into the starting position.
- **Keep a strong contraction** in your stomach muscles throughout and continue to breathe normally.
  - **Repeat on the other side** – maintaining control of your core/stomach muscles.
  - **REPEAT 10-15 TIMES**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**





## 2 | STRAIGHT LEG CURL UPS





## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This movement will help strengthen your main abdominal muscles and is more challenging. This is an adapted ‘curl up’ which doesn’t create abdominal pressure and is more appropriate than a traditional sit up for someone with a stoma.

- **Lie on your back** with your legs straight and toes gently pointed.
  - **Then tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
  - **Place your hands** behind your head and slowly curl your shoulders up off the floor - just a short distance – exhale as you do so pulling your stomach in tight.
  - **Slowly curl** down and repeat.
- **Try to avoid** any bulging of your stomach and keep your stomach muscles engaged throughout. Keep the movement very small and controlled.
  - **REPEAT 10 TIMES (BUILDING UP TO 20)**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**



## 3 | SUPERMAN







## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move builds on your strength, control, balance and coordination. But it must be done with perfect control and technique. Imagine you have a glass of water balanced on your back and try not to spill the contents.

- **Start** on your hands and knees.
  - **Then tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
  - **Slowly slide** out BOTH your arm and the opposite leg at the same time.
  - **Straighten and lift** your arm and leg until they are both just lifted off the floor.
  - **Keep very stable** without any wobbles or side to side movements.
- **Work hard** to keep your balance and good core engagement.
  - **Slowly return** to 'hands and knees' position without losing control.
  - **Swap and repeat** on the other side.
  - **REPEAT 10 TIMES (BUILD UP TO 15-20)**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**



TIP

If you find you are wobbling a lot, then start by lifting only one limb at a time – start with your arms. Then progress to lifting your arm and the opposite leg at the same time.



## 4 | **STANDING** LEG LIFTS





## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move develops balance and core control as well as strength in your bottom muscles. This is an easy move to fit into your day - when brushing your teeth or in the kitchen when you're waiting for something to finish cooking.

- **Stand close** to a chair or other support.
  - **Then tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously.
  - **Slowly lift one leg** out behind you – only lift a small way – and squeeze your bottom muscles.
  - **Keep your trunk** and upper body upright and steady.
- **Squeeze your bottom** muscles tight and lift your leg in tiny 'pulsing' movements.
  - **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES**
  - **REPEAT 2 TIMES ON EACH SIDE**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**



TIP

To vary this move, you can lift your leg to the side or back on the diagonal to work different areas of your bottom and hip muscles.



## 5 | **ARMS OVER**





## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This move helps to build abdominal strength, restore your ability to lift your arms over your head and maintain good control.

- **Lie on your back** with your knees bent.
- **Tighten** your deep abdominal muscles as previously
- **Start with** your hands on your thighs. Hold your arms above your chest – straight up toward the ceiling.
- **Slowly lift** your arms and then lower them over your head towards the floor.
- **Maintain control** and don't allow your lower back to curve/lift and try to avoid your ribs lifting.

- **Slowly return** your arms to the starting position.
- **Breathe** normally throughout.
- **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES (BUILDING UP TO 20)**
- **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

### TO PROGRESS THIS MOVEMENT

Hold a water bottle (filled with water) or a similar household item weighing no more than 1kg. Hold this in your hands as you do the movement.





# 6 | SIT TO STAND



## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This is a great move to build your leg strength, balance, fitness and coordination. Being able to sit and stand is a very important functional movement and it's vital to build this skill again after surgery. This move can also be done as a 'fitness' exercise as it gets your heart pumping if done repeatedly.

Make sure you use a secure chair (dining chair height) which won't slide or tip over and that you're wearing appropriate footwear so you won't slip.

- **Sit on a chair** with your feet hip distance apart with toes pointing forwards and arms out in front of you.
  - **Try to avoid** using anything to pull up. This movement is about using your legs as much as possible.
  - **Simply stand up** to a standing position – using your legs to push up – and stand in a tall upright position. Make sure your knees are in line with your toes.
- **Pause** and then slowly lower yourself back down to the chair – lowering yourself with control – try not to 'drop' back down. Use your legs as much as possible.
  - **REPEAT 5-10 TIMES (BUILD UP TO 20)**
  - **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**



### FASTER:

Works your heart and lungs  
as a fitness exercise.

### SLOWER:

Works your legs more as  
a strength exercise.



## 7 | **SIDE BRIDGE**





## HOW DOES THIS HELP ME?

This will develop strength and control through the side core muscles and hips.

This is a more challenging move, so proceed with caution and only attempt it if you're ready.

- **Lie on your side** with your knees bent at 90 degrees.
- **Have your elbow** directly under your shoulder.
- **Make sure** you have good alignment – so your knees, hips and shoulders are all lined up.
- **Then tighten your deep abdominal** muscles as previously.
- **Very gently lift** your hips from the floor a small amount – use your opposite hand to push up if needed. You should feel the muscles in the side of your waist (closest to the floor) and hip working. If you don't feel strong enough, then simply lower back down and try again in a few weeks.
- **If you feel strong enough**, then push up so your hips are off the floor. Keep everything in a straight line.

- **Hold this position** for only 5-10 seconds to start with. Keep breathing.
- **Lower back** down and repeat.
- **Make sure** you breath normally and keep core engagement.

• **REPEAT 2-3 TIMES ON EACH SIDE**

• **DO THIS 2-3 TIMES PER DAY**

### TO PROGRESS THIS MOVE

Build this up so you are holding it for up to 30 seconds and increase to 3-4 times on each side. Make sure you have perfect alignment and technique.



# WHAT TO AVOID



As you progress it's important to be cautious with certain abdominal exercises.





## Not all abdominal exercises are safe for someone with a stoma. There are some movements which you need to be careful with, adapt or avoid altogether.

The following are examples of 'core' exercises typically found in group exercise classes, gyms, online programs and in pilates and yoga classes.

- **Traditional crunches, especially with legs raised**
- **Sit ups**
- **Front planks**
- **Full push ups**
- **Double leg lifts, including the '100' in pilates or a table top position**
- **Roll downs (in pilates) and roll outs (using a ball or roller)**

These exercises can all cause increased (and unwanted) pressure inside your abdomen (intra-abdominal pressure) and should be avoided or adapted. Increased intra-abdominal pressure can increase your risk of developing a parastomal hernia, so exercises which create this pressure should be done with care or adapted.

If you're not sure what these exercises are then speak to a physical therapist or exercise professional for advice.

Fortunately there are many other ways to engage and strengthen your abdominal and core muscles, such as the movements in this series.





# 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 series 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.



There are lots more resources online at [convatec.com/meplus](https://convatec.com/meplus)



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

Simply call 1-800-422-8811 or visit [convatec.com/ostomy](https://convatec.com/ostomy)