

Returning to Normalcy

A Guide to Physical Intimacy (Sexual activity) After Esophagectomy

Recovery after an esophagectomy requires patience. Many patients and their spouses hesitate to ask their doctor about resuming physical intimacy, but it is an important and natural part of life. This guide provides safe, practical, and comfortable guidelines for you and your partner.

♥ When is it Safe to Start?

A good benchmark is the "**Two-Floor Rule.**" Once you can comfortably climb two floors of stairs without feeling unusually breathless or weak, your body is generally ready for the physical exertion of intimacy. Always start slowly.

🏠 Proper Posture to Prevent Reflux

Because your surgery has permanently changed your digestive system, preventing acid reflux and heartburn is critical.

- **Do not lie completely flat:** Lying flat on your back can cause food or stomach juices to travel back up into your throat.
- **Stay elevated:** Always keep your head and upper chest propped up at a **30 to 45-degree angle**. Using multiple pillows or a bolster or sitting up are safe ways to ensure gravity keeps stomach contents down.



Managing Meals and Water

In Indian households, meals (especially dinners) can be heavy and eaten late. Your new system takes longer to digest food.

- Wait at least **2 to 3 hours after a meal** before engaging in any physical exertion.
- Avoid drinking large glasses of water or milk right before intimacy, as this can cause a feeling of extreme fullness or trigger acid reflux.

Protecting Your Healing Body

- **Feeding Tubes:** If you still have a feeding tube attached to your abdomen, tape it gently flat against your skin using medical tape. Wearing a comfortable, loose cotton vest (banyan) or a soft t-shirt over it will prevent the tube from snagging.
- **Incision Care:** Be careful with the healing scars on your neck, chest or abdomen. Avoid any position that puts direct pressure or friction on your stitches or scars.

Mutual Support and Patience

It is normal to feel weak, tired or self-conscious about physical changes like weight loss or surgical scars. Talk openly with your spouse about your comfort levels. If you feel dizzy, nauseous or breathless, stop and rest immediately. Patience and mutual understanding are key to a smooth recovery.



Personal Notes

Use this space to write down any specific questions you may have for your surgical team during your next follow-up appointment:

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This handout is for general guidance. Always refer to your specific postoperative instructions.

