

*If you have any questions, please ask your nurse.*

## Preventing Pneumonia

Routine mouth care, activity and deep breathing exercises can help prevent pneumonia. Your nurse will review this care with you in more detail.

### Oral care

Brush your teeth and use mouthwash in the morning and at night before going to sleep. This will help decrease bacteria (or germs) in your mouth.

### Activity

Stay as active as you can. As allowed, walk in the halls at least 3 times a day and eat all of your meals in a chair. The nursing staff can assist you as needed.

### Deep breathing and coughing exercises

Use an incentive spirometer 10 times every hour while you are awake. This will help you breathe deeply and cough. Your nurse will show you how to do this. Follow these steps during your hospital stay and for 1 week after you are discharged.

#### *Using the incentive spirometer*

1. Close your lips tightly around the mouthpiece.
2. Breathe in slowly and deeply through your mouth. The disc or ball will rise as you breathe in—try to make it reach the top of the chamber.
3. Hold your breath for 3 to 6 seconds to keep the disc or ball at the highest level you can. Once you can keep it at that level most of the time, try for a higher level.
4. Release the mouthpiece and breathe out slowly.
5. Cough to help clear mucous from your throat and chest.

Cough deeply from your belly, not just from your throat. If you had chest or abdomen surgery, first brace the area with a pillow or folded blanket. Take pain medicine as prescribed to control any pain, if needed. Follow these guidelines during your hospital stay and as you recover at home.

Watch the video “Preventing Complications After Surgery” on [nm.org](http://nm.org). Go to “Patients and Visitors” and then scroll to “I Am Having Surgery.”