

ABDOMINAL SURGERY POST OPERATIVE CARE – OUTPATIENT

Medications

There are 5 medications you may be required to take before and after surgery:

1. Antibiotic
2. Pain Medication—remember this medication might make you feel groggy and constipated and cannot be mixed with alcohol
3. Muscle relaxant
4. Emend
5. Colace

Drains

You will also be discharged with home with your drains in place. There are usually 1-4 drains. It is necessary to record total daily output for each drain. When the drain is near full, empty the contents into a measuring cup and record the amount in ml (equal to cc). You can also use the drain bulb itself that has markings to measure the output. (One teaspoon is equal to 5 cc; one ounce is equal to 30 cc.)

Strip the drain tubing 3 times per day. If the drain requires emptying more than once per day, enter the daily total in the appropriate space on the *Drain Record Sheet*. When your drain output is less than 25 cc in 24 hours for two days in a row, that drain will likely be removed in the office. We use silastic drains, which reduce any discomfort during removal of the drain. The small opening that will remain in the skin will seal in 24-48 hours. This opening may have a small amount of drainage, and should be covered with antibiotic ointment and dry gauze until it seals closed.

Incision Care

Most of your incisions have absorbable sutures that are hidden underneath the skin. Sometimes you might feel a small knot come up in the incision area. Do not worry; this can sometimes happen and will be removed during your office visit.

You will have surgical strips and tape over your incisions. Do not remove this tape. If the skin becomes irritated or starts to itch, apply antibiotic ointment to the area. The tape corners may be trimmed if they lift up. Take extra care when trimming as you may not have normal sensation in this area.

Showering

You will be able to shower three days after surgery. Baths can be resumed one month after surgery and swimming 8 weeks after surgery.

To shower, remove all gauze, leave the tape on your skin. Soap, water and shampoo can run over the tape. When you get out of the shower, gently dab the tape and operated area dry. Apply ointment to drain sites, cover with clean gauze and replace the surgical garment.

Swelling

After surgery, the operated area will feel swollen, especially at the end of the day. This is normal and usually takes at least a month or more to resolve.

Surgical garments

You will go home with a post-surgical garment.

Activities

After discharge, you should limit your activity for 7-10 days. Limiting activity to 20 minutes limits swelling. Swelling can adversely affect your healing by increasing risks of infection, pain and poor scarring. **Each 20 minutes of activity should be followed by two hours of rest with your legs elevated.**

No lifting anything heavier than 5 pounds for the first month. After three weeks, you may gradually resume your exercise regimen.

Sleep Position

You should sleep on your back for at least 6 weeks. Use multiple pillows to keep you from changing position when you are asleep.

Driving

You may start driving after you have stopped all your pain medication and your drains are removed. It is best to wait at least 2 weeks after surgery for street driving, in order to feel confident. You should wait three weeks before driving on Los Angeles Freeways.

Work

You will be able to return back to a desk job, or light duty at 2-3 weeks after surgery. Be mindful that this should be gradual because you will feel more tired and lack the normal reserve of energy.

Scars and Massage

After the incisions have completely healed, you can start applying pressure massage to the incisions to improve the appearance of the scars. Remember that for the first 6 months, your scars will remain red but with time, they will turn lighter as they mature.

Smoking

ABSOLUTELY NO SMOKING for 4 weeks prior to and 6 weeks after surgery (this includes staying out of the room with smokers).

Emotional Support

The recovery period may be very difficult. Mood swings and emotions can be overwhelming. Contact our office for assistance in finding one of the many support groups available.