

ABDOMINAL HYSTERECTOMY & LAPAROTOMY Postoperative Discharge Instructions

You have just had a major abdominal operation. The incision may be up and down (a vertical incision) or sideways (a transverse incision). Your operation may have included the removal of your uterus (hysterectomy) and/or may have included removal of your ovaries. Most of the information in this instruction sheet applies to all these different situations. Specific differences will be addressed separately.

General Activity

In general, it will take approximately six weeks for you to return to "normal." There will still be significant healing beyond that time, but most will be within the first six weeks. For the first two weeks after your surgery, try to get some rest each day. Avoid strenuous work, heavy lifting, and excessive social activity. You may increase your activity gradually. You may go up and down stairs at your normal pace if it is comfortable. If you had a hysterectomy, you should avoid intercourse, baths, and swimming for the first six weeks following surgery unless your physician has instructed you otherwise. You should also avoid heavy lifting (greater than 20 pounds) for the first six weeks. If your incision was transverse (a bikini cut), you should wait a minimum of one week after your operation to drive a car. You should also be off pain medication and feel comfortable performing all of the movements needed to drive. If your incision was vertical or if you had complications with your incision, you should not drive a car until you have been seen for your first postoperative visit and have been instructed by your physician that it is safe to drive. Other normal daily activities may be resumed as tolerated. These include climbing stairs, showering, and short walks. Some patients may take slightly longer to fully recuperate and your return to normal activity level should be individualized as to how you feel and are recuperating. It is normal to feel tired and fatigued after your surgery.

Diet

By the time you are discharged from the hospital, you may resume your usual diet as tolerated. Do not push yourself to eat if you are not feeling up to it for the first few days. Advance your diet as tolerated.

Medications

You may resume your normal preoperative medications as directed. In addition, you may take a prescription pain medication as directed if one was prescribed for you, or you may take over-the-counter pain medication such as Tylenol or ibuprofen as directed for pain. If hormone replacement therapy is planned, your physician will discuss the specific medications and dosages with you.

Incision

Your abdominal incision is still in the early stages of healing. Avoid rubbing or pulling. There may be adhesive tapes across your incision that may be removed by your physician on your first postoperative visit. They may be removed earlier if directed by your physician. The abdominal incision may occasionally drain a small amount of yellow or red fluid. A warm pack or hot water bottle may be used across the area several times daily. If the incision becomes unusually tender, red or inflamed, or if you have a fever greater than 100°F, or if the drainage appears more than minimal (over one teaspoon), notify your physician.

Hysterectomy

If your uterus was removed, you will no longer have menstrual periods. However, you are likely to have a small amount of bloody discharge or drainage from your vagina postoperatively. You will need to wear a sanitary pad during this time - *do not use* tampons. If your bleeding is heavier than a heavy period, please call us.

Removal of Ovaries

If you are post-menopausal and your ovaries were removed, you are unlikely to have additional menopausal symptoms. If you are pre-menopausal and your ovaries were removed, you may experience menopausal symptoms such as hot flashes and you may be a candidate for estrogen replacement therapy. This should be discussed with your physician on an individual basis.

Bladder Catheter

If you had bladder surgery at the time of your abdominal surgery, you may be going home with the catheter in your bladder. Catheter care and bladder training will be discussed with you on an individual basis by your physician.

Miscellaneous

Gas pains after abdominal surgery are normal, but they may produce strong cramps. Walking may alleviate gas pains and can help move the gas in the intestines so you can pass it. If you do not have a bowel movement by the fifth day after surgery, please call us.

Follow-up

A follow-up visit should be scheduled approximately two to three weeks after your procedure to check your incision as well as the healing process. In addition, your physician may review your surgery in greater detail as well as the operative findings and any management plans that may be necessary. You will also have a 2nd follow-up visit approximately six weeks postoperatively.

If you have any questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to call our office Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m.-4:00 p.m. at 314-432-8181, or after hours and on weekends through our exchange at 314-388-6555.