

## POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS

### *What to Expect at Home*

#### **Pain**

Pain is to be expected at home but will continue to decrease over time. You will be given a prescription at discharge for oral pain medication. Use this as needed. Unless your doctor has instructed otherwise, it is OK to take the following in addition to your pain pills: Motrin (ibuprofen, Advil) 400–600 mg every 6 hours. Narcotic pain prescriptions or refills will not be called in to a pharmacy on weekends, or after 5:00 p.m. during the week.

#### **Routine Medications**

Medications you were taking prior to surgery should generally be resumed as directed on your discharge from the hospital.

#### **Incision Staples**

These should be removed 10-14 days after your surgery. You should call the office at (850) 877-7392 to arrange an appointment for removal. If you have sutures (stitches) these will generally dissolve on their own and do not require removal. If you still have some that haven't dissolved at your post-op checkup, let your doctor or nurse know.

#### **Hygiene**

Showers are acceptable. You may shampoo your hair. It is OK to wash the incision gently with a clean cloth and soap and water.

#### **Exercise** *(each procedure is different but these are general guidelines)*

- a. No lifting of heavy objects (10-15 lbs) until after your post-op checkup
- b. Bending and stretching are ok unless it hurts (you may be putting too much strain on your incision if this is the case)
- c. Walking is encouraged, you will get fatigued faster than usual however
- d. Stair climbing is OK, but use caution

#### **Activity**

Driving after major surgery should be avoided for 2 weeks, until reflexes have returned to normal, you can comfortably wear a seat-belt, and you are no longer taking prescription pain medication. Fatigue is common for 6-8 weeks after surgery. You should generally avoid sexual activity until after your post-op checkup. Light vaginal bleeding or discharge is common for 2-4 weeks following a hysterectomy or vaginal procedure. If it hurts, you probably shouldn't do it.

## **Bowel Function**

Bowel function often takes several weeks to return to normal; due to anesthesia, narcotic pain medications, and surgery on the intestines.

- For constipation lasting a day or two:  
Milk of Magnesia, or mild laxative of choice is OK.
- For difficulty with gas pains:  
Walking  
Dulcolx (bisacodyl) suppository or glycerin suppository
- Diarrhea:  
Immodium or Pepto Bismol is ok  
If severe diarrhea (8-10 stools per day) then please contact your doctor

If any symptoms are lasting longer than 2 days, please call your doctor's office.

## **Incision Care**

- Abdominal surgery, laparotomy, or abdominal hysterectomy:  
Clean incision daily with clean cloth and soap and water. Staples will be removed 10-14 days after surgery. Steri-strips (small tapes) may wash off in the shower. If they are still present after 5-7 days, you may peel them off carefully. Drainage or redness around your incision or a fever of  $>101$  should be reported to your doctor or nurse.
- Laparoscopy:  
Care for them as with the incisions above. Any remaining suture material present at your 3 week post-op visit can be removed by our nurse.
- Vulvectomy:  
If you had any tissue removed from the vulva, perineum, or anal area then it is not uncommon to have discomfort when sitting or walking until this area heals. The healing process takes 2-4 weeks, depending on the extent. You may experience light bleeding or drainage from this area. Sitting in a warm sitz bath for 15-20 minutes several times a day may help relieve discomfort and speed up the healing process. Place 1-2 cups Epsom salts in a warm bath. A hair dryer may be used to dry the area and relieve discomfort.

## **Return To Work**

This will be discussed at your post-op visit. As a general guideline, allow 2 weeks after laparoscopic or robotic surgery and 4-6 weeks after major abdominal surgery. If you would like to return to work sooner, please call.

## **Complications**

Please call the office at (850) 877-7392 if you experience any of the following:

- Fever greater than 101.0
- Unusually heavy bleeding
- Uncontrollable nausea, vomiting, or diarrhea
- Redness, tenderness, or swelling in one or both calves of your legs.

## **Home Nursing (Home Health Care)**

Home nursing may be used in the following situations:

- Open wounds
- Home IV antibiotics
- Unusual complications
- Hospice