

Post-Operative Instructions for Open Hernia Repair

Wound Care

- Remove the outer gauze bandage and tape 2 days after surgery and then you may shower. Leave the steri-strips (tapes directly on the skin) for 5 days then remove them. No additional bandage is required.
- Usually the wound is closed with absorbable sutures so there are no stitches that need to be removed. The scar may feel hard for several months.
- Wound infections are uncommon and usually do not occur until several days after surgery. The symptoms include redness around the incision, increasing tenderness and occasional fever or drainage of pus. You should call if any of these signs occur.

Activity after Surgery

- The first 24-48 hours should be spent primarily at rest and taking it easy around the house. The swelling is usually maximal during this time. Following this period, activities can be increased as tolerated and walking is encouraged. You may climb stairs immediately.
- Heavy lifting, over 15lbs., or physical activity involving straining the abdominal muscles is generally not allowed until 4 weeks after surgery.
- You may drive a car when comfortable and narcotic pain relievers are not being used.
- You may resume sexual activity as soon as it is tolerated without discomfort.
- You may swim in 2 weeks.
- You may return to work in 2 weeks (for clerical work) and 4 weeks for manual labor.

Medication

- A prescription for post operative pain medication will be given to you for use as needed. Plain Tylenol or ibuprofen (Motrin Advil) can also be used.
- If antibiotics are ordered, take them as directed on the bottle.

Diet

- Start with clear liquids (soups, Jell-O, popsicles, carbonated beverages and water) and follow with light foods on the day of surgery. Following this a regular diet can be resumed gradually.
- Constipation is common as a result of surgery and pain medication. This can be relieved with increased fluids and fruit in addition to an over the counter stool softener (such as prunes, prune juice, colace). Other laxatives may be used as preferred.

What to expect:

- You may have soreness in the abdominal area similar to an ache you would feel after starting a new exercise program involving your abdominal muscles. This ache will gradually go away within a few days.
- Your abdomen may be distended for a few days after surgery. Shoulder or back pain will also go away.
- You may have bruising or bluish discoloration. It will gradually go away over the next 2-4 weeks. For men, the scrotum may be swollen or bruised; wearing an athletic support and using ice packs will help and this should resolve in 1 to 2 days.
- You may feel sleepy, rest for the first 24 hours.
- You may have a sore throat for a few days.
- It may take a few days before you have a bowel movement. Bowel irregularity is expected with surgery and pain medication. Take prune juice and/or a stool softener if you feel constipated.
- Nausea and vomiting may occur during the first 2 days following surgery. If this fails to resolve or begins later than 2 days, it may be a side effect of narcotic pain medications, so these should be stopped if possible. If symptoms persist, call the office.
- You may notice a lump at the surgery site. This may be normal. If there is no pain, observe it to ensure it does not increase and show it to the surgeon at your postoperative visit. If it continues to increase in size and cause pain, call our advice nurse.

Miscellaneous

- No alcohol or driving for 24 hours or while taking pain medication.
- Do not make any personal or business decisions for 24 hours.
- Call our office at (408) 972-6010 from 9am-12pm and 130-5p or (408)362-4740 after hours and on weekends to speak to our surgery advice nurse if:
 - Persistent nausea and vomiting occurs.
 - You are unable to urinate eight hours after surgery.
 - You notice excessive bleeding or unexpected drainage from the wound site.
 - Your pain is not relieved by pain medication.