



# Postoperative Instructions For Major Surgery

There are a few basic things to keep in mind in the early days and weeks after major surgery. Please use this handout as a general guide. Your doctor's nurse will be calling to talk with you during the first week after you return home. If you have concerns or questions at any point, please feel free to call our office between the hours of 8:30 am and 5:00 pm at (352) 332-7222 or 333-5555. If you have an urgent problem after hours, you may call the same number and speak with the doctor on call.

Most patients are surprised at how tired they feel after major surgery. This is due in part to anesthesia, but also because the body is working hard to heal itself. You should not expect to have much energy initially, and should therefore not plan any tiring activities for the first two weeks. However, gently increasing your activities by taking walks around your home, and slowly building back to normal activities will actually shorten your recovery time. It is now known that prolonged bed rest is not healthy at all, and can in fact lead to serious postoperative complications (blood clots and pneumonia).

Warm showers are encouraged, and help to keep incisions clean. Initially you may want to have someone near by while you shower in case you feel faint or become dizzy. You can use a blow dryer to dry your incision (this is especially helpful if you have steri-strips over your incision).

You can expect your appetite to slowly return to normal. Initially, you should eat bland, highly nutritious meals to give your body the vitamins it needs to heal. It is easy to become constipated after major surgery, especially when using narcotic pain medications and spending more time in bed resting. A good way to avoid constipation is to increase your fluid intake (6-8 glasses of water each day) and to choose fresh fruits and vegetables with each meal.

Sexual intercourse and tampon use should be avoided until after your 4-6 week checkup. You may notice a slight bloody discharge for the first 6 weeks, but this should be fairly scant. If you have any heavy bleeding or pass large clots, you should notify your doctor immediately.

It is important to have a thermometer, and to check your temperature if you have chills or feel feverish. If you have a temperature of  $>100.4^{\circ}\text{F}$ , please notify your doctor. Other symptoms we would want you to notify us of are:

- Incisional pain that is becoming worse instead of better.
- Signs of infection—wound drainage or redness, foul smelling vaginal discharge, or urinary frequency or burning.
- Pain, redness or swelling in either leg.

Your doctor will want to see you again in the office approximately 1-2 weeks after your surgery. Your nurse will offer to help you schedule this appointment when she calls to check on you.