

Colorectal Surgery Associates, P.C.

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Patient Name:

Postoperative Instructions to Abdominal Surgery Patients

Major abdominal surgery requires 4-6 weeks at home to fully recover. As a continuation of your hospital stay, the "at home" postop period should be spent resting and allowing your body the time needed to heal. Keep the following guidelines in mind. Your physician will discuss any instructions specific to your case.

Abdominal Incision:

- 1) If you leave the hospital with your staples still in place, we usually remove these approximately 14 days from the surgery date. **The day you leave the hospital please call our office to set up an appointment to have our nurse remove those staples. We will also need to make a follow up appointment in the office approximately 3-4 weeks following surgery to see your doctor.**
- 2) Clean incision line with warm water, no soap. A 4x4 gauze dressing may be used if experiencing drainage or chafing under your clothes.
- 3) You may shower and take tub baths.
- 4) **If you have an ostomy**, you will have already had instructions from the enterostomal nurse at the hospital and you may also have a visiting home nurse to help you adjust to the daily activities needed to take care of your stoma.

Activities:

- 1) Increase activity gradually over the next 4-6 weeks.
- 2) You may do your normal activities inside your home, but avoid straining, vacuuming, heavy lifting, straining, or athletic activities for 6 weeks. You may gain strength by walking a little each day, starting in your home, then gradually working your way to the end of the driveway, then down the street, etc. The rule of thumb is when you get tired or sore, stop what you are doing.
- 3) Climb stairs as tolerated but do not carry anything with you as you climb the stairs. This adds too much strain on your incision.
- 4) Avoid lifting weights of 10 pounds or more for 6 weeks. Avoid aerobics for 6 weeks.
- 5) You may ride in a car as a passenger as soon as it is comfortable. You may not drive a car until after your first postoperative visit with the doctor (**exception: if you had laparoscopic surgery you may be able to drive approximately 2 weeks after surgery. Your doctor will advise you about this**) You should also not drive a car after taking any narcotic containing pain medications.

- 6) Resume sexual relations as tolerated, when you are pain free, approximately 2-4 weeks postop.
- 7) Talk with your physician regarding the specifics of returning to work. However, the average patient is not able to return to work for six weeks. If you do heavy work, you may be off a little longer; if you have a “desk” job, you may be able to return a little earlier.

Diet:

- 1) Often several smaller meals during the day instead of 3 large meals a day are easier to adjust to.
- 2) Eat cooked fruits and vegetables. Avoid raw fruits and vegetables for 4 weeks after surgery.
- 3) Drink approximately 6-8 glasses of water a day. Drink small amounts of caffeinated beverages (coffee, tea, soda) as these may dehydrate you. Avoid alcoholic beverages while taking pain medication.
- 4) Take your pain medication as prescribed by your physician. **REMEMBER:** The “on call” doctor will not fill a narcotic prescription after office hours or on the weekend, so if you are running low on your pain pills please call us in plenty of time during regular working hours so we can refill this for you.
- 5) If you are experiencing mild discomfort you may use “over the counter” pain medication (Aleve, Advil, Extra Strength Tylenol). **Avoid aspirin** unless taken on a daily basis as prescribed by internist or cardiologist. Please check with your surgeon before resuming your daily aspirin.

Bowel Habits:

- 1) Occasionally patients have frequent stools for 1-2 months following colon surgery. If you have true diarrhea, please call our office.
- 2) If you are constipated following surgery please call our office. Occasionally we may need to add a mild laxative at bedtime for a while, such as Milk of Magnesia. Please call our office for help with dosage information.

If you experience any of the following symptoms, please call our office (816-941-0800):

- 1) **Redness, swelling, tenderness in your incision.**
- 2) **Unusual drainage from incision.**
- 3) **Running a fever of 100 degrees or higher.**
- 4) **If you have not had a bowel movement in 2 days.**
- 5) **Severe abdominal pain.**
- 6) **Nausea or vomiting.**
- 7) **Inability to urinate or pain with urination.**

Remember we are available to you 24 hours a day. If you or your family has any questions or there is any problem, please do not hesitate to call us. Please pack these instructions in your suitcase and bring to the hospital upon admission. Your doctor will review them with you on discharge. For further questions please call 816-941-0800.