

THE SURGICAL OPERATION

- **Before the operation:** Take a shower and clean the area.
- **The day of the operation:** The area needs to be shaved by the surgical team. You will not eat or drink for 6 hours before the operation. Most often, you will take your normal medication with a sip of water. You will need someone to drive you home.
- **What to bring:** medications, loose-fitting, comfortable clothes, slip-on shoes that don't require that you bend over.

Fluid and Anesthesia

- An intravenous line will be started to give you fluids and medication.
- For general anesthesia, you will be asleep and pain free during the operation. A tube may be placed down your throat to help you breathe during the operation.
- For spinal anesthesia, a small needle with medication will be placed in your back alongside your spinal column. You will be awake during the operation but pain free.

Preventing Pneumonia and Blood Clots

- Movement and deep breathing after your operation can help prevent postoperative complications such as blood clots, fluid in your lungs, and pneumonia. Every hour, take 5 to 10 deep breaths and hold each breath for 3 to 5 seconds.
- When you have an operation, you are at risk of getting blood clots because of not moving during anesthesia. The longer and more complicated your surgery, the greater risk. This risk is decreased by getting up and walking 5 to 6 times per day, wearing special support stockings or compression boots on your legs, and for high-risk patients, taking a medication that thins your blood.

Recovery

If general anesthesia is given of if you are taking narcotics for pain, it may cause you to feel different for 2 to 3 days. You may have trouble remembering and feel tired. You should not drive, drink alcohol, or make any big decisions for at least 2 days.

Nutrition

- When you wake up from the anesthesia, you will be able to drink small amounts of liquid. If you do not feel sick, you can begin eating regular foods.
- Continue to drink about 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.
- Eat a high-fiber diet so you don't strain while having a bowel movement.

High-fiber foods: beans, bran cereals and whole-grain breads, peas, dried fruits (figs, apricots, and dates), strawberries, pears, apples and plums.

Activity

- Slowly increase your activity. Be sure to get up and walk every hour or so to prevent blood clot formation.
- You may go home the same day for a simple repair. If you have other health conditions or complications, such as nausea, vomiting, bleeding, or infection after surgery, you may stay longer.
- Do not lift items heavier than 10 pounds or participate in strenuous activity for at least 4 weeks or longer if advised by your surgeon.

Work

- After recovery, you can usually return to work within 2 to 3 days.
- You will not be able to lift anything over 10 pounds, climb, or do strenuous activity for 4 to 6 weeks following operation in the abdomen.
- Lifting limitation may last for 6 months for complex operations.

Wound care

1. Always wash your hands before and after touching near your incision site.
2. Do not soak in a bathtub until your stitches, Steri-strips, or staples are removed. You may take a shower after the second postoperative day unless you are told not to.
3. Follow your surgeon's instructions on when to change your bandages.
4. A small amount of drainage from the incision is normal. If the dressing is soaked with blood, call your surgeon.
5. If you have Steri-strips in place, they will fall off in 7 to 10 days.
6. If you have a glue-like covering over the incision, allow the glue to flake off on its own.
7. Avoid wearing tight or rough clothing. It may rub against your incisions and make it harder for them to heal.
8. Protect the new skin, especially from the sun. The sun can burn and cause darker scarring.
9. Your scar will heal in about 4-6 weeks and will become softer and continue to fade over the next year.

Bowel Movements

Avoid straining with bowel movements by increasing the fiber in your diet with high-fiber foods or over-the-counter medicines, be sure you are drinking 8 to 10 glasses of water each day.

Pain

- The amount of pain is different for each person. The new medicine you will need after your operation is for pain control, and your doctor will advise how much you should take. You can use throat lozenges if you have sore throat pain from the tube placed in your throat during your anesthesia.
- Extreme pain puts extra stress on your body at a time when your body needs to focus on healing.



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