

COLON & RECTAL SURGERY OF NEW ENGLAND

Postoperative Instructions *Open Abdominal Surgery*

These are procedures that are performed through a traditional larger incision. You may need a traditional incision for your operation to be done safely and effectively especially if you have had prior surgery.

Restrictions

- You may walk and climb stairs. We recommend lifting no more than about ten pounds. (One gallon of water)
- You may shower. (Avoid soaking in water for more than 10 minutes.)
- We recommend not driving or returning to work until you have had your follow-up appointment.

Things you can do

- Walking is permitted and encouraged.
- Climbing stairs is permitted.
- Light activity is permitted (*If it hurts, don't do it. Gradually resume the activity in a few days.*)
- You may shower or bathe, but avoid soaking in the water for more than ten minutes; it may cause incisions to break down.

Wound care

- If you have steri strips, keep them on until they fall off on their own (If one is falling off, you may gently peel it off). You may keep them open to the air.
- If your incisions were closed with staples, you may cover them with dry gauze and tape them to prevent the staples from catching on your clothing or simply leave them open to the air.
- After you shower, pat the incision dry. (staples or steri strips)

Medications

- You will be given a prescription for pain medicine when you are discharged from the hospital. In addition to the prescription pain medicine that you were given, you may take Motrin, Advil, or ibuprofen at the same time. This often gives better pain relief than either one alone.

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- Take Colace 100 mg two times daily while you are taking narcotic pain medicine.
- Take Milk of Magnesia (or any other laxative) at the first sign of constipation.

Diet

- After colon or rectal surgery, you will be given information regarding a low-residue or low fiber diet. You should use this as a guide for your diet. (This diet gives the colon less work to do and allows for better healing.)
- We recommend small meals until your appetite increases. Be sure to keep yourself well hydrated.

Bowel movements and constipation

It is not unusual for your first bowel movement to be diarrhea, to contain blood, and/or contain pieces of tissue. Don't be alarmed. It is also common to become constipated after surgery. If you have already had a bowel movement, it is safe to take a laxative if you become constipated.

Call the office if:

- The pain worsens and you need to increase the amount of pain medication.
- You experience persistent fever or chills. (You may have low-grade fevers on and off for the days following surgery; this is your body's normal reaction to surgery.)
- There is redness of more than ½ inch around the incisions.
- There is drainage of cloudy fluid or pus (Drainage of a yellowish bloody fluid is normal.)
- You experience persistent nausea or vomiting.

Please call the office to make a follow-up appointment for one to two weeks after surgery and if you have any other problems, questions, or concerns.

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