

_____’s Care Guide after Abdominal Plastic Surgery

I came to the hospital on _____ and left on _____

I came to the hospital because _____



How I may feel and what I should do

These symptoms are **normal**

I may feel pain

- I may have shoulder pain for up to 1 week after surgery.
- I should take my pain medication before my pain gets really bad.
- I should follow the instructions on my medication bottle.
- I should use less narcotic pain medication as my pain gets better. Examples are Percocet, Oxycodone, Tylenol 3, Morphine, or Hydromorphone.
- **I can’t** drive or drink alcohol while taking narcotic pain medication.
- I should talk to my pharmacist about using Tylenol Extra Strength and Advil.
- I should hold a pillow tightly against my incision when I cough.
- I should bend forward a little when I walk to take pressure off of my incision.

I may feel bruising, swelling, and numbness

- I may have bruising, swelling, and numbness for 6-8 weeks.
- I should wear the supportive undergarments applied in the operating room until I see my surgeon.

I may feel constipated

- Pain medication can make it hard for me to have a bowel movement.
- I should drink lots of water, and eat lots of fruits and vegetables.
- **I shouldn’t** strain or push too hard when having a bowel movement.
- I can take a stool softener like Senekot if I haven’t had a bowel movement in 2 days. I should ask my pharmacist for help.

I may feel tired

- Pain medication can make me feel sleepy. I should rest when I’m tired.

I may not feel hungry

- I should eat smaller meals and snacks more often.

My notes and questions

These symptoms are **not normal**

- I have pain, redness, or swelling in my lower leg.
- My incision looks more red or swollen.
- My incision has yellow or green drainage.
- My temperature is over 38.0°C or I have chills.

I need to **call my surgeon** or go to the nearest **emergency department** if I can’t reach my surgeon.

⚠ These symptoms are **an emergency** ⚠

- I have trouble breathing.
- I have chest pain.
- My incision is bleeding and doesn’t stop with pressure.
- I feel dizzy.

I need to **call 911**.

How I should care for my incision

If I have steri-strips (small strips of tape on my incision)

- The steri-strips should fall off on their own in 7-10 days.
- If they haven't fallen off on their own, I can gently remove them in the shower after 10 days.

If I have a dressing

- I should look at my incision each day and check for signs of infection.
- I can put gauze over my incision and cover with soft supportive undergarments.

How my activities will change

Showering

- I can shower 48 hours after my drain is taken out.
- I can let soapy water run over my incision, but **I shouldn't** rub my incision.
- **I can't** have a bath, go swimming, or use a hot tub until I talk to my surgeon.
- **I shouldn't** use any creams on my incision unless I have talked to my surgeon.

Exercise and physical activity

- I should practice deep breathing to keep my lungs healthy.
- I should be active to help me gain strength and feel better.
- I should go for walks often to help my recovery. I should rest and take a break when I need one. I should bend forward a little when I walk for 3 weeks.
- **I can't** lift anything where I need to strain for 6 weeks after my surgery.
- **I can't** do intense physical activity for 6 weeks after my surgery.

Resting and sleeping

- **I shouldn't** lie flat for 4-6 weeks after surgery.
- I should put a pillow under my head and a pillow under my legs when resting or sleeping.

My notes and questions

My medications

- I was given a list of medications I need to take.
- I was told why I need to take my medications.
- I was told about the side effects of my medications.

My appointments

- I was given a list of my appointments.
- Someone reviewed my list with me.
- I was told about the automated phone call.

Where I can go for more information

For information about...	I can call or go to...



March 2019

