

Preparing for Surgery:

The healing process after abdominal surgery varies with each person. Here are some points to keep in mind.

- With any surgery, there is some discomfort or pain. We will prescribe pain medication, usually a narcotic and an anti-inflammatory. You should take it as recommended and only as needed. Read your “Narcotic Use and Post-Op Pain” handout for proper use of pain medications.
- During the first 1 to 3 weeks, expect to feel tired from the anesthesia and in general, due to the healing process.
- Rest frequently during the day, and limit visitors until you feel more up to it.
- Altered sensation (such as shooting or burning pain) or numbness is common after surgery. Normal or near normal sensation should return within a few months but some areas may stay numb permanently.
- You will be able to return to work in 4-6 weeks.
- **Do not** lift more than 5 pounds for 6 weeks. Ask your doctor for further limitations. If it hurts, don’t do it.

- **No** driving for 2-3 weeks or while taking your pain medication. You may wear your safety belt if you place a small pillow over your abdominal incision.
- No sexual activity for 3-6 weeks.
- Stop taking Aspirin and Motrin products 2 weeks before surgery and for at least 2 days after surgery. Other blood thinning products to avoid are Vitamin E, Ginkgo Biloba, and Garlic Supplements.
- To be safe, take only acetaminophen (Tylenol®) for pain in the two weeks before surgery.
- **Do not** smoke or be around anyone that smokes for 1 month before and for 2 weeks after your surgery. If you are using nicotine patches or gum, you should stop 2 weeks before surgery and for 5 days after surgery.
- Shower the night before and the morning of your surgery. Wash with an antibacterial soap.
- If you are scheduled for surgery under:
Local anesthetic: You may eat a normal diet the day of surgery.
Intravenous sedation: You must not eat anything after midnight on the day before surgery. You may drink clear liquids up to 3 hours before surgery.

General anesthesia (in the main operating room): You will receive instructions from Pre-Admission Testing. A Same Day Surgery nurse will call between 3-6 pm the day before surgery. You will be instructed not to eat anything after midnight. You may drink clear liquids up to 3 hours before surgery.

Post Operative Drain & Incision Care:

Your plastic surgery team will closely follow your post-operative care. You will most likely spend one night in the hospital.

Your doctor may place suction drains in your abdomen to remove fluid build-up. If so,

- Your hospital nurse will review your drain care. You will learn how to measure and record the total amount of fluid from each drain.
- Call the clinic at **(603) 650-5148** and schedule an appointment with the nurses to have your drains removed when the drainage is 30cc or less in a 24-hour period for 2 days in a row.
- Note: Abdominal swelling above the incision may last for several weeks to months due to tissue fluid build-up.

- You may shower 2 days after surgery, even if you still have your drains.
- To reduce the strain on your incision, you should remain in a flexed/recliner chair position for 3-5 days.
- Change your dressings daily as directed.
- If present, stitches are removed in 2 weeks.
- Spitting sutures: Occasionally an area of redness and tenderness develops where a dissolving stitch becomes irritated and is pushed to the surface. If this occurs, it is not an emergency. You may clip the stitch or call the clinic for an appointment with the nurse.
- **Do not** use over the counter lotions, solutions, or herbal preparations on your incisions unless directed by your doctor.
- You will be provided with an abdominal binder or girdle. Wear it 24 hours a day for 4-6 weeks, removing it briefly to shower.

Signs and Symptoms of Infection:

- ◆ Temperature over 100° F
- ◆ Redness of the suture lines that is beginning to spread away from the incision after the first 48 hours.
- ◆ Increased pain/discomfort that is not relieved by pain medication
- ◆ Yellow pus-like or foul smelling drainage larger than dime size from the incisions or drain sites

If any of these symptoms occur, contact your doctor right away. Call **(603) 650-5148**.

On weekends or after hours call **(603) 650-5000**, and ask the operator to page the plastic surgeon on-call.

Prescription Line: **(603) 653-3905**

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Abdominoplasty and Panniculectomy

Pre-operative and Post-operative Instructions