

Postop Instructions for General Surgery

Thank you for choosing the General Surgery Department at the Minneapolis VA Medical Center for your operation. We hope that we have met your needs and have served you in a courteous, caring, and efficient manner. As always, **you** are the most important factor in your recovery. Please follow the instructions below carefully.

Dressings

You may remove your gauze bandage on the third day after surgery. You may have either steri-strips or staples on your incision. **Do not remove the steri-strips.**

Steri-strips are small pieces of tape that may have been used to help keep your incision closed. They will loosen in about five days. Leave them on until they fall off. If they have not fallen off after ten days, remove them **carefully**.

In some cases, metal **staples** are used to hold an incision together. If you go home with staples, your doctor will tell you when they can be removed. This will be done at the VA Medical Center, by a private doctor, or by a public health nurse. If your staples are still in ten days after surgery, call one of the phone numbers listed at the end of this sheet.

Showering and Bathing

You may shower after the bandage is removed. Let the water run over your incision and gently pat dry. Do not rub or scrub your incision. If your incision has any openings, do not shower unless your doctor says you can.

Do not take a tub bath or soak your incision until after your stitches or staples are removed.

Do not use lotions or powders on your incision until after your staples or stitches are removed.

Activity

You may do what is comfortable. It is not wise to lift weights or do anything that requires maximum physical effort for several weeks. Discuss individual restrictions with your surgeon. You may drive when you feel comfortable enough to drive safely.

Work

You may return to non-physical work whenever you feel up to it. Discuss physical work restrictions with your surgeon.

Diet

You should eat a healthy diet after your operation.

You can help avoid constipation by drinking plenty of liquids and eating high fiber foods (fruits, vegetables, whole grains). This will keep your stools soft. You may take one ounce of

(over)

Milk of Magnesia the evening after surgery to encourage a bowel movement.

Do not smoke for six weeks after your operation.

Expectations

You can expect some swelling, black and blue areas, and some numbness after your surgery.

Call the Minneapolis VA Medical Center, at the numbers listed below, if you have:

- Chills or a temperature of 100° or greater
- Increased amount of redness along the incision, some amount of pinkish tissue or a small amount of bloody drainage are normal for a few days after surgery.
- Increased tenderness, swelling, or puffiness
- New openings along the incision
- Yellowish, greenish, or foul smelling drainage
- Significant bleeding
- Increased pain after the first 36 hours

Minneapolis VA Medical Center Phone Numbers

- Your coordinator at (612) 467-2065. See contact card for coordinator's name and extension.
- General Surgery Clinics at (612) 467-3497 or (612) 467-3634.
- Telephone Care at (612) 467-2242, Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 4:30 p.m.
- Urgent Care at (612) 467-2771.

To use the toll-free number, call 1-866-414-5058 and when asked enter one of the underlined numbers given above.

Remember, it is important that you take very good care of yourself at this time.

Content approval: Specialty Care PSL

June 2000

Reviewed April 2001

Revised August 2003

Revised July 2005

VA Medical Center - Minneapolis, Minnesota