

General Post-Operative Instructions

Patient Instructions for When You Return Home After Out-Patient Surgery

Activity

You **MUST** have a responsible adult accompany you and provide transportation home

Some health care facilities can provide transportation home, but you must arrange this with the facility prior to your surgery

Rest after your procedure, the process of surgery may make you feel very tired, find a comfortable place and get some sleep when you return home

No driving until instructed by your Doctor/Surgeon that you may operate a motor vehicle

Remember to call our office during regular office hours to schedule a follow up appointment with your Doctor/Surgeon. You should schedule this post-op appointment for the week following your surgery

Diet

It is not unusual for you to feel nauseated or to have a “queasy” stomach after surgery

Start by eating something light; for instance, tea and toast, soups, gelatin, clear soda

You may progress to your regular foods as you feel better

Medication

For most operations you will go home with one or more prescriptions to fill at your local pharmacy

If you have been given an antibiotic after your procedure, it is important to take the medication as instructed and to finish taking all of the pills as directed

Do not drive a car or operate any type of machinery while taking any narcotic pain medications

Pain medications should be taken as instructed; usually you may take one pain pill by mouth every four hours; sometimes you may take two pain pills by mouth at the same time; the medication bottle label will state how many pills you may take in a 24 hour period

These pain medications may cause nausea (to decrease the nausea feeling, take the pain pills with food), drowsiness (get some rest after surgery), and possible constipation (it is a good idea to take an over-the-counter stool softener with the pain medications; your local Pharmacist can recommend one)

You may also take other medications to help control your pain after surgery, such as Ibuprofen, Aleve, Motrin or Advil (unless stomach/kidney problems prevent you from using NSAIDs)

Most pain medications have a base of Acetaminophen (Tylenol), so you must be careful if you would like to add more of that type of medication to your pain control program.

Acetaminophen (Tylenol) must be limited to **8 extra strength or 12 regular strength tablets a day for a healthy adult**

Pain Medication Refills; Please plan ahead for the weekends and holidays; contact our office early so that our staff may speak with your Doctor/Surgeon about a possible refill of your pain medication; Remember that the offices are closed on the weekends and holidays, and our on-call staff is for emergency situations. Some planning on your part will ensure an adequate medication supply

Taking Care of Your Surgery Site

After surgery, the surgery area (site, incision) will have bandages over the spot, whether your surgery was on a shoulder, leg, knee, or ankle. You **MUST** keep your bandages clean and dry after surgery. Bandages that become wet and are left next to the skin can cause your skin to break down, and this may begin a series of post-operative complications

If you are going to wash, do so by sitting at a sink; you may cover the surgery area with a bag to keep it as dry as possible while you wash, and ask for help from a family member or friend

No soaking in a bath tub

No getting into a swimming pool without your Doctor/Surgeon's permission

No putting of the surgery site under water other than when you are cleared to wash over that area

You may remove the bandages from a:

Shoulder – in 2 (two) days

Leg, knee – in 2 (two) days

Achilles tendon – are not removed until your first office visit after surgery

Once the surgery bandages have been removed, you will see just what method your Doctor/Surgeon chose to close your surgery incision (the opening in the skin); you may see silver colored clips which are called skin staples, stitches in the skin which can be several different colors and materials, and steri-strips which are tapes that close the surgery incision

You may wash up in the shower with clean soap and water; you may wash lightly over the surgery incision with clean soap and water; it is a good idea to use a clean disposable wash cloth/washcloth each time you wash; towel dry the area; air dry the area and then you may apply band-aids to cover the incision

Do not apply any lotions or ointments over your incision, near the surgery area or anywhere on your surgery shoulder, leg, knee or ankle; your Doctor/Surgeon will tell you when you may lotion around this area

Cold (Ice) Therapy

You may have a cooler type of ice machine prescribed for you after surgery, an ice sleeve, an ice pack, or simply a bag of ice cubes; any cold therapy is helpful to control pain and swelling of the surgery area

Icing is best used every 2 hours, for 20 minutes at a time

Ice packs may be used over the surgery bandage; the cold will sink through the layers of bandages and help with pain management

Be careful to protect your skin from any of the cold therapy methods; immediately after surgery, the bandages will protect your skin; once the bandages are removed, you may continue to use the cold therapy, but you must protect your skin from the cold, for instance, with a small towel; skin which is unprotected from the cold therapy is at risk for frost bite

Weight Bearing Status Following Leg, Knee and Foot Procedures

There are several different types of weight bearing after knee surgery; that is, how much weight you may place on the surgery leg when you are out of bed

Weight bearing as tolerated means you may put as much weight as you are comfortable on your surgery leg

Partial weight bearing means you may put a little weight on your surgery leg

Non-weight bearing means you cannot put any weight on your surgery leg and must use you crutches/walker for support when you are out of bed and moving around

Remember to follow your Doctor/Surgeon's directions about your weight bearing status after surgery; your weight bearing status may change as you recover from your procedure