

North Florida Surgeons Baptist Jacksonville Division: Post-Op Info (Updated 8/18/24)

General Information: These instructions are meant to help you have a smooth recovery and serve as a general guide to recovery. **If your surgical team told you specific instructions regarding diet or restrictions, please follow those.**

- After surgery you should stay out of bed and walk frequently, this will help your bowel activity return to normal as quickly as possible. You should also bend your ankles up and down to improve blood flow and reduce the risk of blood clots.
- Chew gum or have sucking candy for 10 minutes 3x/day, this helps your bowels to recover and can help ease nausea.
- After any abdominal surgery you should avoid heavy lifting (>15-20 lbs.) for several weeks, your surgical team will tell you for how long.
- Continue to do deep breathing (with the spirometer if you have it), take 8-10 deep breaths/hour while awake.
- In general, you should not drive for 2 weeks. If you are not taking any narcotic pain medication and feel back to normal you may be able to resume driving sooner
- It is normal to have some bruising around the incisions after surgery. You may also bruise where you received blood thinning shots in the hospital.

Wound Care: Always wash your hands with soap and water before and after touching your incisions to reduce the chance of an infections. Your incisions may be covered with different types of dressing, below are the most common:

- **Surgical Glue or Steri-Strips:** You may shower normally and pat the incisions dry afterward. Both will fall/ flake off on their own over a few weeks.
- **Prevena or Pico:** This is a vacuum type dressing that is covering your incision and helps the skin to heal faster. The battery will typically last for 7 days. When the battery stops you can gently peel it off and discard it in the trash.
- **Aquacel:** This is a tan dressing that stays on for 7 days. It is normal to see a little drainage on the middle part. If it becomes saturated (or waterlogged in the shower), you can take it off and discard in the trash.
- **Gauze:** If you have gauze and a clear plastic dressing covering your incisions you may remove the gauze after 2 days. If you have gauze packing this usually needs to be changed daily. We will instruct you on how to do this.

A small amount of rose-colored fluid drainage from the wound is normal. If this happens just cover with a clean, dry gauze. If you have increasing redness, worsening pain, or thick brown/yellow smelly drainage please call our office. If you have bleeding from the incision place a dry gauze over it and hold pressure for 15 minutes. If you still have bleeding, please call our office. Some bruising at incision sites is normal.

Showers: You may shower the day after surgery (no baths or swimming for at least 2 weeks). Let soapy water run over the incision sites. When you get out of the shower just pat them dry. Do not put anything on the wounds (eg. Neosporin).

Comfort Measures:

- For patients who had breast surgery we recommend wearing a supportive bra, like a sports bra. For male patients who had inguinal (groin) hernia surgery we recommend tight underwear or a jock strap for support. You may have received an abdominal binder, this if for your comfort. In general, it best worn while up walking around. You can take it off to sleep or if sitting in a chair.

- Ice packs on for 20 mins, off for 2 hrs for the first 24-48 hrs. helps to reduce pain and swelling. After 48 hrs. you may use a heating pad for comfort.
- A lot of people have “gas pain” for the first few days after surgery. You can chew simethicone (Gas-X) up to 4x/day as needed.

Diet: Please follow the diet discussed with you by your surgical team. For some types of stomach surgery, you will need to follow a special diet for several weeks. If you were not given specific instructions, then you may start by drinking clear liquids when you are awake and advance to solid foods as tolerated. Try to start with a light meal at 1st to avoid nausea after anesthesia.

- Drink plenty of fluids/water – aim for 1.5-2 L/day (6-8 cups)
- Try to follow a high protein diet, you should aim for 60 - 70 g/day. This will help your body to recover more quickly. You may supplement with a protein supplement (ex. Boost or Ensure) to help reach this goal.
- Do Not Drink alcohol for at least 2 weeks

Medications:

- **Pain Medication:** After surgery you can expect to have pain for the first 2-3 days and will improve over the next week or two. The goal is to control your pain where it is mild and manageable. Try to minimize narcotics because of their side effects (nausea, constipation, sleepiness, etc.) For the first 48 hrs. we recommend alternating 1000 mg acetaminophen (Tylenol) every 3 hours with 400-600 mg of ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) on a schedule. (For example - at 8AM 400 mg ibuprofen, 11AM 1000 mg acetaminophen, 2PM 400mg ibuprofen, 5PM 1000mg Tylenol, 8PM 400mg ibuprofen). This will provide with you good baseline pain control. If you have pain in addition to the above then you may take 1-2 of the narcotic pain medication you were provided (oxycodone, hydrocodone, tramadol, etc.). Please let us know if you have kidney, heart, or liver problems, so we can discuss an alternate regimen. After 48 hrs. you can just take Advil or Tylenol as needed.
* **DO NOT DRIVE OR OPERATE MACHINERY AFTER TAKING ANY NARCOTICS.** *
- **Muscle Relaxers:** Depending on the surgery you may have been given a muscle relaxer (ex. methocarbamol or cyclobenzaprine) to take as needed. These can cause sleepiness so be cautious of when you take them.
- **Nausea Medication:** A little nausea or an episode of vomiting can occur after abdominal surgery. You may be prescribed a nausea medication to take as needed (ex. Zofran or Phenergan). Peppermint and ginger may also help with nausea. If you are having persistent nausea or vomiting, please call the office.
- **Bowel Regimen:** Constipation is common after abdominal surgery. We recommend you take a stool softener (ex. Colace) 2x/day until your bowel function is back to normal, especially if you need the narcotic. If you have not had a bowel movement after 2 days add a laxative (ex. MiraLAX or Dulcolax). Drinking a lot of water and walking helps things to return to normal too. If you are having diarrhea then you should stop the stool softener. If you are having persistent diarrhea, please call the office.

If you are having severe abdominal pain, repeated fevers (above 101°), persistent nausea and vomiting, or are unable to keep liquids/food down call North Florida Surgeons Baptist Jacksonville Division at **904-398-0033**. If it is after hours, we have a call service and one of our doctors or physician assistants will assist you.

**** If you are having difficulty breathing or severe chest pain call 911****