

WHAT TO EXPECT AFTER ABDOMINAL SURGERY

- You will have some discomfort in your abdomen. Your physician will give you a prescription for pain medication to help make you comfortable.
- You will likely be passing gas; but, you may not yet have had a bowel movement.
- You may have irregularity to your usual bowel habits for up to 4 weeks.

DIET

- A soft diet should be eaten for 1 to 2 weeks.
- Avoid raw fruits and vegetables, tough meats and spicy food.
- It's best to eat 6 small meals a day and drink meal replacement shakes in place of meals when you are initially discharged home.
- Meal replacement shakes include Ensure, Boost, and Carnation Instant Breakfast.
- If you have an ileostomy or colostomy, you will have special instructions and will likely have met with a nutritionist prior to discharge.
- Drink at least 8 glasses of liquids daily to avoid dehydration (decreased or dark urine).

BOWEL FUNCTION

- Bowel function may be erratic at first.
- You may have some abdominal cramping with some good days and some bad days.
- Your bowel function may take several months to return to a normal pattern; it takes your body time to adjust.
- If you have symptoms of mild abdominal cramps, bloating, nausea, vomiting, or absence of passing gas or stool, you may restrict your diet to liquids only. If the symptoms persist beyond 24 hours or become severe, please contact your physician.

ACTIVITY

- Walking is good and climbing stairs is okay.
- Avoid activity which causes pain.
- Avoid lifting weights greater than 15-20 pounds or straining abdominal muscles (sit ups, pushups, and weight lifting) for approximately 6 weeks. Ask your physician at your post op visit when it is safe to increase your exercise regimen.

ABDOMINAL WOUNDS / INFECTIONS

- You will likely have pieces of skin colored tape on your abdominal incision(s).
- You may shower with soap and water and get the tape wet; pat dry.
- Leave the tape in place and use gauze only if you are having any drainage; change daily if necessary. If the tape becomes loose or hanging, it is okay to remove it.
- Keep your incisions protected from clothing, rubbing, etc. to decrease the risk of infection.
- If you have excessive swelling, redness, drainage or severe pain around the incision, you should contact your physician.
- If you have a fever greater than 101 F you should contact your physician.
- If you have severe abdominal discomfort, nausea and vomiting, or feeling of being unwell, please contact your physician.

DRIVING

- Do not drive for at least one week after discharge.
- Do not drive within 4 hours of taking pain medication.

MEDICATIONS

- You will be given a prescription for pain medication.
- If you need refills that are not included with your original prescription, please call the office during office hours (M-F 9am to 5pm) to request a refill. Refills will not be given on weekends/nights by the on-call physician. **Allow 3 business days for a refill.** Due to federal law, scheduled pain prescriptions cannot be called in, faxed or electronically prescribed. The majority of post-op pain medication our physicians prescribe fall under this rule. **Plan on having a friend or family member pick up your prescription from our St. Vincent office.**
- Resume any medications your primary care physician has prescribed; you will be given a medication discharge instruction sheet at the hospital.
- You may be given further instructions regarding fiber, anti-diarrheal medications, antibiotics, steroids, or other medications.

OSTOMY OR STOMA (if applicable)

- You will receive instruction on how to care for your stoma while you are in the hospital and you should feel comfortable with its care at the time of discharge.
- If you have difficulty with keeping a pouching system on for at least 24 hours, if there is recurrent bleeding, severe pain, swelling around the stoma, the stoma stops functioning, or the stoma output is >1500cc in 24 hours, please contact your physician.
- Bananas, peanut butter, potato salad and tapioca will thicken the stool. Metamucil or other powdered fiber supplements will also help.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS

- Please plan on attending your scheduled post-op appointment.
- If you have any questions, concerns, or problems, please call the office at 971-254-9884 to be seen sooner.

If you are experiencing a medical emergency, call 911 or go to the emergency room.