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Abdominoplasty Post Operative instructions

Dressings

Dr. Chambers will put dressings on the day of your surgery under your abdominal binder. These should be left in place. If you have some leakage around the dressings please reinforce with dry gauze, abd pads or feminine hygiene pads. Please do not take off the existing dressings. If you are unsure what to do contact the office.

Your binder should stay on at all times. It is okay to open it up to readjust but please otherwise have it done up, particularly when you are moving around.

Your dressings will be changed at one week after surgery. Until your dressings are changed please take sponge baths. You will usually be able to shower after your first appointment. The binder can be removed while showering.

Drains

You may or may not have drains in place. These are small rubber grenades attached to plastic tubes. These should be emptied every 8 hours (or as needed for the first 2-3 days) and the volume recorded. You then squeeze the grenade and replace the stopper to recharge it. Fluid coming out of the drain can be bloody for 2-3 days however should start to get more straw-like in color. It is not abnormal for it to remain blood tinged for the entire week. These are usually removed at your first follow up appointment.

Pain

You will be provided with a prescription for pain medication. Ideally this should be started right after leaving the hospital before any pain starts. Take the medication regularly over the 1st 24 hours even if you are not having any discomfort, then switch to as needed. Start taking Tylenol and advil immediately as well and for the first 3 days take this regularly. Please do not take aspirin or herbal medications for this first week. You should not drive while taking prescribed pain medication.

Pain medication can cause constipation. It is recommended that you pick up a stool softener such as Colace with your prescription to avoid straining bowel movements.

Pain tends to peak between 24-48 hours after surgery. If you are having more pain at 72 hours than previously which is not resolving please contact the office. Pain associated with a hot feeling at your incisions, redness and swelling can be a sign of an infection.

Activity

You are advised to walk slightly bend at the waist for the first 10 days or so until your skin stretches to accommodate the change. Sleeping in a slightly flexed position is also advised. This can be accomplished by sleeping in a recliner or putting pillows under your back and knees to flex the hips.

It is important to start walking right away – trips to the bathroom and the kitchen are encouraged as this helps blood in your legs circulate.

No lifting over 5 lbs for the first week and over 10 for the first 4 weeks. Please avoid strenuous exercise for the first 4 weeks.

What to watch out for

If you start to develop pain in your calf/ves, acute shortness of breath or difficulty breathing you should call the office immediately. If the office is closed please go to the emergency department. These can be signs of a DVT or pulmonary embolism.

Your pain should steadily improve after 48 hours or so. If you are experiencing worsening pain, swelling, redness around your incisions, foul smelling discharge or systemic symptoms of fever, chills and or rigors please call the office. These are signs of infection and should be addressed. If this is over a weekend or you're feeling acutely unwell please go to the emergency department.

What to Expect

After surgery you will likely be very tired for the first week or so. This is totally normal. It is also possible to have a low-grade fever the first night after a general anesthetic. Your incision site and abdominal wall (if we fixed your muscles) as well as your flanks will be quite sore and possibly bruised. This is normal. You will likely have some degree of lost sensation above the incision on your abdomen. This is also normal. For this reason we do not recommend hot water bottles at all or ice longer than 20 minutes as you can burn yourself.

Gradually increasing your diet from clear fluids to broth to soft foods over the first day is recommended. After the first night it is okay to eat whatever you want. It is recommended to increase your protein intake for the first 2 weeks to aid in healing. It is normal to have some nausea for the 1st 24 hours.