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## Post-operative Abdominal Surgery Instructions

### Activity

- Fatigue is one of the most common complaints following surgery. This will gradually improve over the next 4 weeks. Expect to be tired after small bouts of activity.
- Once at home, you may resume much of your normal activity short of aggressive physical exercise. Walk short distances everyday and gradually increase your activity. You may go up & down stairs.
- No lifting of a weight greater than 20 lbs (9kg) for 6 weeks. Exercise should be started cautiously after this time with the realization that anything that hurts probably should be avoided.

### Diet

- You should be on a soft or low residue diet upon discharge; this should be continued at home for approximately 2 weeks (this includes breads, cereals, chicken, fish, soup). Avoid large quantities of raw fruits and vegetables.
- After 2 weeks, gradually reintroduce your regular diet.
- Be sure to drink plenty of fluids.
- You may take a nutrition supplement or protein shakes (e.g. Boost, Ensure).

### Driving

- You may drive when you are off of narcotic pain medications and over the normal fatigue that is so common after operations. This usually is one to two weeks after discharge.

### Follow-up

- Call the next business day after discharge to schedule a "POSTOP" appointment within 1 to 2 weeks.
- Routinely, we will follow up with patients within two weeks. If there are staples that require removal, postoperative problems, or wound issues as above, a follow-up appointment will be scheduled sooner.

### Pain Medication

- A prescription will be given to you and you should take the medicine before the pain is too severe.
- Ibuprofen may be helpful for pain control in addition to the narcotic prescribed. As your pain subsides, you may use Tylenol or ibuprofen instead of the narcotic pain medication.
- Many prescription pain medications contain Tylenol (acetaminophen). Do not take additional Tylenol if your prescription already contains it.
- All pain medication should be taken with food to prevent nausea and stomach irritation, which are common side effects.
- We will **only refill medications during office hours**; please plan accordingly.

### Wound Care

- If your wound is closed with staples or Steri-strips, then you may shower normally. Steri-strips over the incision are water resistant and will fall off after 7 to 10 showers. Blot your wound dry after showering.
- A small amount of thin, liquid drainage is common; a piece of gauze held by tape may be worn to protect your clothing.
- If your wound is partially or completely open, then you should follow the wound care instructions given to you in the hospital (in this situation, it is normal to see thick drainage on the dressings). Showering with soap and water is encouraged; blot dry and reapply the dressings afterwards. Dressing changes should be done two or three times per day until otherwise instructed and the first office evaluation should be in one week.



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## **Post-operative Abdominal Surgery Instructions (cont.)**

### **What to look for and what to do**

- Postoperative complications can occur while in the hospital or at home. Certain signs and symptoms are useful to alert potential problems.
- Nausea can be common after any abdominal operation, but if it is associated with abdominal distension and vomiting, then the first step is to revert back to a clear liquid diet. If this does not help or if symptoms progress with significant vomiting and bloating, then the office should be called; expect to report to the emergency room for evaluation.
- Irritation or redness of the wound is common; even a small amount of drainage from the wound is not unusual; painful swelling and thick drainage should alert you to a potential wound infection and we should be notified. Expect to report to the office that day or the next.

### **When to call a physician**

- Temperatures greater than 101 degrees F.
- Severe redness or drainage of pus from the incision site.
- Nausea or vomiting that persists more than 12 hours.
- Worsening abdominal pain.
- Severe leg pain or swelling.

**Be sure to visit our website [www.atlcrs.com](http://www.atlcrs.com) to check our Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) section.**