Panniculectomy
What to expect and how to prepare

This handout explains what to expect, how to prepare, and how to plan for your recovery after panniculectomy surgery.

About Your Surgery

A panniculectomy is surgery to remove extra skin and fat that hangs down from the abdomen.

How to Prepare

- For 1 week before your surgery, do not take any aspirin or other products that affect blood clotting. Two of these are ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, and others) and naproxen (Aleve, Naprosyn, and others). See the handout “Medicines to Avoid Before Surgery.”

- Do not shave any part of your body that you do not already shave every day. If you normally shave near your surgical site, do not shave that area for 2 days (48 hours) before your surgery.

- You may go home the same day of your surgery or you may stay the night in the hospital. This will depend on your medical needs.

- Plan for a responsible adult to drive you home from the hospital. You may not drive yourself home. If you prefer to ride the bus or take a taxi, the responsible adult must ride with you.

- Plan for a responsible adult to stay with you for the first 24 hours after surgery. You may also need help with cooking and errands for the first week after surgery.

Day Before Surgery

- Arrival time: A staff person from the pre-surgery clinic will call you by 5 p.m. the day before your surgery. If you are having surgery on a Monday, they will call you the Friday before. If you do not hear from them by 5 p.m., please call 206.598.6334.
The staff person will tell you when to come to the hospital and remind you how to prepare for your surgery. If you have questions, they may forward your call to a nurse in the pre-surgery clinic or ask you to call your surgeon’s nurse.

- **Shower:** Take a shower the night before your surgery:
  - Use the antibacterial soap your nurse gave you to wash your body.
  - **Do not** use the antibacterial soap on your face, hair, or private parts. (See directions that came with the soap.) Use your own soap and shampoo on your face and hair.
  - Use clean towels to dry off, and put on clean clothes.

**Surgery Day**

- **At home:** Take another shower the morning of your surgery. Follow the same instructions as you did for your shower the night before.
- **At the hospital:** One adult can stay with you while you wait to go into surgery.

**After Surgery**

**For Your Safety**

Medicine given during and after your surgery will affect you. For 24 hours after your surgery do **not**:

- Drive, or travel alone
- Use machinery
- Drink alcohol
- Sign legal papers or make important decisions
- Be responsible for the care of another person

**Pain Control**

- You can expect to have some discomfort after surgery, even if you take the pain medicine you received. If you still have a lot of discomfort after taking your pain medicine, call the clinic and ask to talk with a nurse.
- Please read the handout “Pain Control After Reconstructive Surgery” to learn more.

**Incision Care**

You will have an incision across your lower abdomen, from one hip bone to the other. The incision may be closed with **sutures** (stitches) or surgical staples. The incision may also be covered with white tape (Steri-Strips) and a soft outer dressing.
• Remove the outer dressing 48 hours after surgery, before you shower for the first time.

• If you have white tape over your incision, leave the strips in place until they fall off. If needed, your provider will remove them at your first clinic visit.

• If you have sutures, they will dissolve on their own. If you have staples, they will be removed at your first clinic visit.

**Drains**
You will have 2 or 3 drains in your abdomen. Before you leave the hospital, we will teach you how to care for them. Please read the handout “Closed Bulb Drain Care: For a Jackson-Pratt (JP) or Blake drain” to learn more.

**Shower**
• You may shower 48 hours after your surgery.
• Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, or go swimming until the drains are removed and all your incisions are fully healed.

**Swelling**
After surgery, you may be placed in a tight-fitting abdominal binder. Wearing this garment will help lessen swelling.

If you received a binder, wear it 24 hours a day (except when you shower) for 1 month after your surgery. You may wear the binder over a thin shirt or tank top to keep it from rubbing on your skin.

If you did not receive a binder on the day of surgery, or if you want extra support, you may want to buy a tight-fitting Lycra spandex garment (compression garment) that will cover your surgery site. This garment will help with swelling. It will also help you to feel more comfortable after surgery.

**Activity and Work**
• **For 4 weeks after surgery, do not** lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. (A gallon of milk weighs more than 8 pounds.)
• Go for a walk at least a few times every day. Moving helps keep blood clots from forming in your veins. Walking is the best exercise you can do during your recovery.
• Most people take 2 weeks off work to recover from surgery. If your job requires you to lift heavy objects every day, you may need to take longer before going back to work, or ask for lighter tasks during your recovery.
When to Call

Call the clinic or your provider if you have:

- Bleeding or drainage that soaks your dressing
- A fever higher than 100.5°F (38°C)
- Shaking and chills
- Any sign of infection in your incision:
  - Redness
  - Increasing pain
  - Swelling
  - Bad-smelling drainage
  - A change in the type or amount of drainage
- Nausea or vomiting, or both
- Concerns that cannot wait until your follow-up visit

Questions?

Your questions are important. Call your doctor or healthcare provider if you have questions or concerns.

Weekdays from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Center for Reconstructive Surgery, 206.598.1217 and press 8.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask for the resident on call for your surgeon to be paged.