

Activities of Daily Living After Abdominal Surgery

This handout gives guidelines to follow after abdominal surgery. Follow these guidelines to protect your abdomen and incisions and to help your recovery.

General Tips

- Get a good night's sleep every night. Get washed and dressed every day.
- When you plan each day, include times to rest.
- Try to get up and move at least 1 time each hour during the day.
- Slowly resume the hobbies and social activities you enjoy.


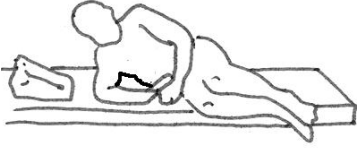

Protect Your Abdomen

For **4 to 8 weeks** after your surgery, or until your healthcare team tells you otherwise:

- Do **not** lift, pull, or push anything that weighs more than 10 pounds (a gallon of milk weighs almost 9 pounds).
- Do **not** do any movements or exercises that use your abdominal muscles, such as sitting straight up from a lying position.
- Do **not** kick or push any heavy items with your feet or legs.
- Follow the tips in this handout when doing daily activities. Do **not** hold your breath or strain at any point.

Getting Out of Bed

Use the 3-step "logroll" method to get out of bed.

 <p>1. Before you move your feet off the bed, roll onto your side, with your knees bent.</p>	 <p>2. Move your feet off the bed. Use your arms to push your body up to a sitting position. Try to keep your abdomen relaxed.</p>	 <p>3. Sit on the side of the bed before you stand up.</p>
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Getting into Bed

1. Sit far back from the edge of the bed, near the top third of the bed.
2. Lie on your side.
3. Stay on your side and keep your knees bent while you lift your legs onto the bed.
4. Keeping your hips and knees together, roll onto your back.

Standing Up from a Bed, Chair, and Toilet

- It is harder to stand up from low, deep, or soft surfaces. **Avoid sitting in soft couches and chairs.**
- Your occupational therapist (OT) may advise using a **bedside commode or grab bars** at home if your toilet is too low.

Getting Dressed

- Wear loose-fitting tops so that you do not twist your upper body when getting dressed and undressed.
- When putting on pants, socks, and shoes:
 - Sit down and bring your foot up to the level of your opposite knee instead of bending down to reach your foot.
 - If it is hard for you to reach your feet, use a sock aid, long-handled reacher, or long-handled shoehorn for putting on and taking off your socks, shoes, and pants. Your OT can show you how to use these tools.

Showers

- You can shower when your doctor tells you it is OK. Have someone help you the first few times you shower, until you feel sure about your safety.
- If stepping into a bathtub to take a shower, support yourself as you step sideways over the side of the tub. To do this:
 - Face the wall and place both hands on the wall.
 - Bend 1 knee with your foot behind you to move it into the tub. Do **not** lift your knee toward your chest.

Practice this action with your OT before you go home.

- Your OT may also advise using a shower chair or tub-transfer bench when you shower. Sitting will keep you safer and help you save your energy.
- Do **not** take a bath, sit in a hot tub, swim, or use a sauna or steam room until your care team says it is OK.

Specific Activities

For **12 weeks after surgery**, or until your care team tells you otherwise:

- **Have someone else do chores** such as vacuuming, sweeping, mopping, and other housework that takes effort. Avoid raking, digging, mowing the lawn, or any other yardwork.
- **Avoid lifting.** Ask someone else to lift anything that weighs more than 10 pounds. This includes groceries, laundry, children, pets, garbage, or other items.
- **Do not open** tight jar lids, stuck windows, or heavy doors. Ask someone for help.
- **Avoid** holding your breath and bearing down to do any activity.
- **Avoid** using exercise equipment, unless your therapist or doctor says it is OK.
- Do **not** do anything that makes you bend or twist your upper body or bounce a lot. This includes activities such as bowling, skiing, jogging, riding a horse, golf, tennis, yoga, boating, and driving on gravel or bumpy roads. Drive slowly over speed bumps and avoid potholes.
- **Do not drive** until you are no longer taking prescription pain medicine. These drugs slow your reaction time and make driving unsafe.
- **Before you start driving**, sit in your car and test your ability to move quickly. Make sure you do not have any soreness, feel guarded, or hesitate when you move your leg. If you have any of these symptoms, wait for another day and try again.

Sexual Activity

When you can resume sexual activity depends on your rate of recovery after surgery. Use common sense and protect your abdominal muscles. If you have any questions, ask your doctor.

Be Patient with Yourself

It is normal to feel frustrated, stressed, tired, or depressed after major surgery. Some people feel they cannot think as clearly as usual. Do not make yourself do mentally challenging tasks. Talk with your care team if you have these feelings and are overwhelmed by them.

Questions?

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

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