

After Your Open Laparotomy

Discharge instructions

This handout gives instructions to follow at home after your surgery. It includes what activities are safe to do, problems to look out for, and instructions on how to call your care team if you have any problems.

Diet

- Drink plenty of fluids. You will know you are drinking enough when your urine is pale yellow.
- Try to eat soft, bland foods for the first few days after surgery. Avoid foods that upset your stomach.
- Eat small, frequent meals during the first week after surgery.

Activity

- Do not work for the first week after surgery.
- Do not drive while you are taking any narcotic pain medications. Wait to drive until you can safely use the brakes and turn the steering wheel.
- Do not have sexual intercourse for 10 - 12 weeks after surgery.
- Do not lift anything over 10 pounds (about the weight of a gallon of milk) for 6 weeks. This includes activities around the house.
- Do not do strenuous (difficult) activities, such as running, aerobics, swimming, or biking for 6 weeks. After 6 weeks you can slowly restart these activities.
- We recommend that you walk each day after surgery. Walking is healthy and helps you to heal. You can walk up and down stairs.

Discharge Medications

- Always take your pain medication with food to prevent nausea.
- Pain medications can cause constipation. Take your prescribed bowel medications regularly for the first few weeks after surgery.
- You may take anti-inflammatory medicine, such as ibuprofen. Alternate these with your narcotic pain medication throughout the day for the first week after surgery. Anti-inflammatory medications work best if you take them regularly, instead of only taking them when you have pain.

Incision Care

You may shower after you leave the hospital, but **do not sit in water** of any kind for 6 weeks after surgery. It is okay for your incision area to get wet in the shower. Gently pat this area dry after your shower.

If you have staples: You will need an appointment to have staples removed 7 to 14 days after surgery. At this appointment we will put on steri-strips (bandages). These should stay in place for about 7 days. They often fall off on their own.

If you do not have staples: You have suture under the skin that is designed to dissolve as the incision heals. You may also have skin glue that comes off as the incision heals.

Vaginal Bleeding

You may have light bleeding. Some people have no bleeding for a few days, and then notice some bleeding or spotting after that. This usually lasts for up to three weeks but can be longer. Heavy bleeding or large blood clots are **not** normal, and you should call us if that happens.

When to Call Your Care Team

- Pain that is not helped by medications or rest
- Temperature above 101°F (38°C)
- Persistent nausea or vomiting
- Heavy vaginal bleeding with blood clots or bright red blood
- Pain and redness or leaking fluid from your incision
- Pain or swelling in your legs
- Pain or burning when you urinate

How to Contact Your Care Team

Please call right away if you have any questions or concerns about your surgery. We are here to help you.

- Monday – Friday from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m., call the Gynecology Oncology clinic at 206.598.8300, option 5. The nurses may be helping another patient, but if you leave a message we will call you back.
- After hours call the hospital answering service at 206.598.6190 and ask for the Gynecology Oncology resident or fellow on call to be paged.
- Send a MyChart message for non-urgent questions or concerns.

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 Gynecology Oncology Clinic at 206.598.8300, option 5.

After hours and on weekends and holidays, call 206.598.6190 and ask to page the Gynecology Oncology resident on call.