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General Postoperative Instructions

After Your Surgery & Recovery at Home

Going Home

Most patients go home 3-4 days after open incision abdominal surgery. Those having laparoscopic surgery usually go home within <24hr. You will need a ride home from the hospital.

Activity

We want you to stay active and sleep well. No heavy lifting >10lbs, impact sports, or heavy work for 4-6 weeks after abdominal surgery to avoid wound healing issues or incisional hernia.

Diet

We want you consuming a regular diet and staying hydrated at home. Constipation is common after abdominal surgery, so ensure you are drinking plenty of water, adding fibre (e.g., Metamucil®), and staying active.

Incision care

Always wash your hands before and after touching your incisions. You can usually shower 2 days after surgery. Avoid soaking your incisions and pat the area dry. No baths, hot tubs, or swimming for 4-6wks after surgery.

Top bandages can usually be removed after 5 days or if saturated, with underlying Steri-Strips remaining for up to 2wks after surgery.

Managing pain

It is normal to have some discomfort or pain. This should slowly improve but might last a few days to weeks. Your pain should still allow you to move, deep breathe, cough, and do every-day tasks.

Your surgeon will provide instructions for “multimodal analgesia,” a combination of over-the-counter (OTC) and prescription meds to optimize pain control.

After abdominal surgery, your surgeon will likely recommend starting OTC pain pills like acetaminophen (Tylenol®) and a non-steroidal anti-inflammatory medication or NSAID (e.g., ibuprofen [Advil®, Motrin®] or naproxen [Naprosyn, Aleve®]) as instructed on the bottle for the first 72hrs, then as needed. No NSAIDs if you have kidney, stomach, or heart issues.

If OTC medications aren't improving pain, add the prescription medication. This may be an opioid (narcotic) medication to be used for a short amount of time (e.g., Dilaudid, Tramadol). No driving while taking opioids. You can also ask your pharmacist or call 8-1-1 with medication-related questions.

Follow-up

You should see your family doctor 1-2 weeks after surgery, and your surgeon 4-6 weeks after surgery.

Niagara Health | South Niagara Sites

Niagara Falls Hospital - 5546 Portage Rd, Niagara Falls, ON L2E 6X2
Welland Hospital - 65 Third St, Welland, ON L3B 4W6

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