

General Surgery Post-Operative Instructions

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You just had an operation. The instructions in this letter will help you with your recovery, and give you an idea of what to expect in the next few days. If you have any problems or questions not covered in these instructions, call the office.

*For the management of post-operative pain you have been given a narcotic analgesic, usually either Vicodin or Percocet. With either of these drugs you can take 1 or 2 pills every 4 hours. You should not take other medications containing Acetaminophen (Tylenol) while you are taking these medications. Do not wait for severe pain to set in before you take your next dose of this medication. As you begin to experience discomfort, take your next dose. This will minimize your discomfort, and you will end up taking less medication in the long run.

*Unless you have had an ulcer, you should also take Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin) 400-800 mg. three times daily with meals. This will provide a baseline level of pain reliever in your system, and minimize the need to take the narcotic pain pills.

*Your activity should be restricted somewhat for the next 7-14 days. You should not participate in strenuous activity or lift anything heavier than a gallon of milk. You should continue to be active, and I encourage you to take at least one long walk per day. A safe rule of thumb is "if it hurts, don't do it."

*You may shower beginning two days after the procedure. Do not take a bath, hot tub, or swim in a pool until you are seen in follow-up.

*If you experience constipation (a common side effect of the narcotic pain pills), you should take Milk of Magnesia. Take 1 tablespoon every evening at bedtime. You may also take a stool softener (Docusate Sodium or Colace) twice a day. For severe constipation, call the office.

*You may remove the dressing over your incision two days after the procedure. If you notice thin strips of paper tape on your skin, leave them in place until your next appointment, they are aiding in keeping the incision closed.

*A small amount of bleeding and/or bruising is normal after an operation, but you should not see blood clots or dark red blood saturating the dressing. If this is the case, call the office.

*If you notice worsening redness, pain, or drainage from the wound, or if you notice a foul smell or run a fever greater than 101 degrees Fahrenheit, call the office. If no one is available to answer the phone, report to the Emergency Room or leave a message with the answering service for the Surgeon On-Call.