

**Post Operative Instructions**

### General Instructions For Surgical Procedures

1. Expect to feel pain and soreness in the post-operative time. Bruising and swelling are best managed with ice packs and elevation of the affected area. Be careful not to allow contact with the skin to prevent frostbite or damage to the skin (bags of frozen peas or corn work well). Expect some swelling for up to 3 months.
2. Pain is perceived very differently by each individual. Frequently one or more pain medication prescriptions are given. These medications should NOT be taken together. Choose one medication and take as directed. If problems arise from the use of a particular medication, discontinue its use and begin another medication. Many times, the need for a stronger pain reliever decreases in a few days. One can either increase the frequency between doses, reduce the dose (example: cut the pill in half) or change to a milder pain medication.
3. All pain medications need to be kept out of the reach of children and animals.
4. All pain medications are very nauseating and will cause vomiting if taken on an empty stomach. Please take all pain medication with food.
5. All pain medication is very constipating, please use stool softeners and/or laxatives as needed. Do not wait several days before realizing the need for laxative. Many over-the-counter options include softeners such as Colace or laxatives such as Senokot-S, Milk of Magnesia, Correctol, Dulcolax or for severe constipation- oral Fleet’s Phospho-soda.
6. All pain medication will affect your abilities and judgement, therefore do not attempt to perform important tasks, (example: driving, balancing checkbooks, operating heavy equipment, etc.) under their influence.
7. One should not drive until one is no longer taking narcotic pain relievers and one’s pain is decreased to the point where one’s reaction time is back to normal. This may be 1-2 weeks on average for most of the procedures performed but may vary.
8. Nauseas most frequently passes quickly after surgery. Prolonged nausea is usually related to a particular pain medication or taking the medication on an empty stomach. More than one prescription is often given in order that one can try different medication to alleviate this problem. Nausea medication may be used to assist but is not intended to allow one to continue to take a medication that is causing problems.
9. Antibiotics are often needed when drains are left in place post-operatively. These should be taken as directed and continued as long as a drain is present. Please use the refill if the drain stays in longer then the prescription lasts.
10. Itching not accompanied by a rash is usually due to pain medication for some individuals. This is not an allergy but can be very annoying. Mild itching can often be managed by Benadryl 25 — 50mg every 6-8 hours. Changing to a different pain medication is usually advisable.
11. Dressing should be changed daily or more often as needed to keep the area clean and dry unless otherwise specified.
12. Showering over wounds with soap and water is usually recommended with a few exceptions (see the instruction sheet for your particular procedure.) Pat dry, preserving the steri-strips. Gently drying the areas with a blow dryer set on a cool setting and using your hand to check the temperature of the air striking the wound area is helpful. Cover the area with a gauze dressing once dried. If present, one should affix the drain to a belt loop around one’s waist or neck while showering (an old cord out of a housecoat or an old pair of pantyhose work well for this purpose)
13. Early walking is essential to the prevention of blood clots that could pass from the legs to the heart or lung causing very serious problems (pulmonary emboli). One cannot and should not be immobile after surgery. Calf pain or leg swelling are the most common signs of blood clots in the legs and are symptoms that should be reported immediately.
14. Low-grade temperatures up to 100 degrees are common in the first 2-3 days post-operatively. Atelectasis- or small areas of collapse in the tiny air sacs in the lungs- is the most common cause of this temperature elevation. Increase activity- walking, taking deep breaths, forcing a cough- will usually resolve this problem.
15. Infection is usually accompanied by increased pain, drainage, redness, swelling or fever. Please notify us immediately and have your pharmacy’s telephone number available.
16. Drains are often required after surgery. It is not unusual to have occasional pieces of material pass through the drain. This represents particles of fat or protein and is not alarming. Keep the drain sites dressed and strip the drains to keep them flowing. Remember- the drain works by vacuum; therefore the collection bulb must remain compressed in order to exert vacuum pressure to keep the drain functioning.
17. If the drain falls out — DO NOT attempt to push it back in. This will cause infection. Remove the drain if it has fallen out and cover the opening with dry gauze. The hole will seal within 24-48 hours.