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## **Abdominal Surgery Postoperative Instructions**

### **Care for your incision:**

1. The incision site is closed with either stitches or staples. If stitches are used, they will absorb on their own, usually in 4-6 weeks. There may be a knot that is present and this can be removed at your post-operative appointment. There will be light brown steri-strips present covering your incision and these can be removed after 7 days.
2. It is common to have a light vaginal drainage that may be pink, light red, or light brown. This is normal and may last up to 8 weeks. It should not be heavy like a period or passing large clots; if so, then call the office immediately.
3. If staples are used, these will need to be removed in 3-7 days, depending on the site. You will have a staple removal appointment in the office to have these removed.
4. It is fine to allow water to run over the incision site with a shower, but do not submerge under water as in a bath or pool for 2 weeks, see below.
5. If you see redness, swelling, drainage of blood or pus from the incision site, call the office immediately, or go to the ER if after hours.

### **Activities after surgery:**

1. Walking and light housekeeping is allowed, but limit any lifting to no more than 10 pounds until your first follow up appointment.
2. Do not insert anything into the vagina - no tampons, no douching, and especially no intercourse until you are fully cleared by your doctor- usually 8 weeks. There are stitches present inside at the top of the vagina and anything inserted into the vagina can cause these to pull apart and additional surgery is needed to correct this problem.
3. Driving is allowed once you no longer need the stronger narcotic pain medication and if the seat belt is comfortable over your incision site, usually within 7 days.
4. Do not submerge in water- no bath tub, no pools, no hot tubs, no river/ocean water for the first 2 weeks. Shower only for the first 2 weeks and it is fine to shower any time after the first 24 hours.
5. Exercise is fine to resume once you no longer feel pains- usually after the first 10-14 days. Light activity, such as walking, is best at first and listen to your body. If you have discomfort, then stop the activity for a few days or until the pain resolves. Do not over do the activity

and avoid any direct stress or strain to your core muscles, such as planks, pushups, sit-ups until cleared by your doctor- usually 4-6 weeks.

6. Returning to work is possible after 2-4 weeks, if no strenuous activity is required.

**Diet:**

1. You may resume a regular diet. You may not have much of an appetite at first and this is normal. Eat what you feel like, but get plenty of fiber and fluids to help with avoiding constipation.
2. You may take a stool softener daily, such as Colace and Surfak, as these can help avoid constipation. These are available over the counter. Other options include Metamucil, Milk of Magnesia, and Magnesium Citrate.
3. Take a daily multivitamin as this can help with healing.
4. Drink at least 64 fluid ounces of water daily.

**Pain Control:**

1. Pain medications will be electronically sent to your pharmacy of choice prior to your discharge home from the hospital. These usually include Motrin (ibuprofen) and a stronger narcotic- Hydrocodone with Tylenol (Norco). If you are allergic to these medications, other will be sent. These are best taken in an alternating fashion. The Motrin is safely taken as 1 tablet every 6 hours as needed and the Norco can be 1-2 tablets every 4-6 hours as needed. It is best to take one of the Motrin and then start with one Norco 3-4 hours later and alternate this for the first 24-36 hours to keep your pain under good control once you go home from the hospital. If your pains are minimal, then only take the Motrin every 6 hours and save the stronger narcotic medication for evening time, as it does tend to cause drowsiness.
2. Do not drive while taking the stronger narcotic medication.
3. Pain medications are not refilled after hours or on weekends. Call the office during normal business hours if refills needed.

**Go to the Emergency Room if you have any of the following:**

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| 1. Temperature over 100.4°F   | 5. Persistent nausea/vomiting/diarrhea      |
| 2. Heavy vaginal bleeding     | 6. One sided leg pains and/or swelling      |
| 3. Increasing abdominal pains | 7. Difficult urinating or pain with voiding |
| 4. Severe shortness of breath |   |

**Follow up appointments:**

1. Your follow up appointment is usually scheduled for 4 weeks and 8 weeks after your surgery. It will be included with your discharge paperwork from the hospital. Also patients with staples at the incision site will have a staple removal appointment in 3-7 days, depending on the site of the staples.

At Genesis Gynecology, I want you to have the best surgical experience and post-operative course possible, so please call our office anytime if you have questions or concerns.

