



AN AFFILIATE OF HOSPITAL SISTERS HEALTH SYSTEM

## PATIENT EDUCATION: POSTOPERATIVE CARE

### What to expect after

Whether you are having a major or minor procedure, planning ahead before your surgery will have a positive impact on your recovery.

**For Same Day Surgery patients, please refer to the following guidelines:**

#### ***Activity:***

- Make arrangements to have a ride home from after your surgery and to have someone stay with you when you arrive home.
- Plan to rest and relax the afternoon and evening of your surgery. Even after minor surgery, you may feel drowsy and tired for a number of hours.
- Expect to rest the first day after your surgery.
- Check with your physician before performing any strenuous activities after the surgery.
- You should not drink or smoke for at least 24 hours after surgery.
- You should not drive a car or operate machinery until your doctor confirms it is safe to do so.
- It's a good idea to make arrangements to have housework done before surgery, so you won't be tempted by dust bunnies when you arrive home.
- Do not make any major decisions, such as signing contracts, for at least 24 hours after your surgery.

#### ***Diet:***

- Your doctor will instruct you on the diet that is best for you. You will most likely be instructed to start with clear liquids, such as soft drinks, tea, apple juice, then advance to soup and crackers before gradually working up to solid foods.
- Avoid greasy, heavy foods the first day.

#### ***Medications:***

- Your doctor will most likely prescribe medications during your recovery period. Please have the prescriptions filled as soon as you leave the hospital.
- Take the medicine as instructed for the maximum benefit.

## **PATIENT CARE: POSTOPERATIVE CARE, p. 2**

### ***Dressings and Wound Care:***

- Your doctor should inform you of how to care for your dressing.
- Keep the dressing clean and dry, and watch for signs of infection, which include swelling around the area of the wound, redness, warmth or heat, excessive bleeding or drainage, a foul smell, pain or a fever.
- You should call your doctor if you experience any of the following: a fever greater than 101 degrees, pain that is not relieved by the pain medication prescribed by your doctor, cloudy or foul smelling drainage from incision, redness, warmth and firmness around incision, persistent nausea or vomiting the next day, or bleeding and oozing that saturates the bandage covering the wound. You may also be given more specific instructions to assist you with caring for yourself at home after surgery. When possible, we like to include family or friends in the discharge instructions.

**For Inpatient Surgery, please refer to the following guidelines:**

### ***Hospital Activity:***

- The first day after surgery, you will feel sleepy and drowsy and will most likely do plenty of sleeping. The first day is not typically a good day for visitors.
- Your nurse will check on you frequently, every hour the first two hours and then every two hours for 24 hours. Please refer to the above same day surgery list for details on what to expect once you leave hospital after inpatient surgery.

### **When to call the surgeon with concerns**

When recovering at home, it is important to know when to notify the surgeon of any complications that arise after surgery. The following signs and symptoms are warnings of possible complications and should be reported to the surgeon immediately:

- Difficulty breathing
- Fever over 100 degrees
- Black, tar-like stools
- Pain that sharply increases, or becomes uncontrollable
- Wound drainage problems; redness, bleeding or opening at the incision site
- A decrease in ability to function (ex: cannot walk to the bathroom)
- A change in level of consciousness or ability to wake
- Persistent diarrhea, constipation, nausea, or vomiting
- Inability to tolerate food or drink
- Unexplained leg pain in one or both legs