



## **Laparoscopic Cholecystectomy Post-op Instructions**

### To Do List:

- Take acetaminophen and ibuprofen (if allowed) tablets every 6 hours together for 2-5 days.
- Approach physical activity slowly - if you do not have pain with an activity, it is safe to continue.
- There is waterproof glue over the incisions - you can shower whenever you want. The glue will flake off over time. No bandages or dressing changes required.
- Please review the post op instructions below if you have questions.

## **Pain**

Soreness and pain in the abdomen - at the incision site and in the right upper belly is normal. Pain will be worse with movement, changing positions from laying to seated to standing. You may also notice pain in the shoulder and upper back - this occurs because the same nerve that senses pain in the upper abdomen does the same in the shoulder and back and sometimes the signal can feel like it's coming from either of these areas.

We recommend taking the following (if allowed) every 6 hours for the first few days after surgery as needed:

- 650mg to 1g of acetaminophen (Tylenol)
- 400mg to 600mg of ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin)

Applying ice to the surgery site for 20 minutes at a time can also be helpful.

If you are experiencing significant pain that is preventing you from going on a walk or falling asleep, please call the office to discuss prescription pain medications. Opioid pain medications like oxycodone, will cause constipation, so we recommend following the instructions below for constipation.

## **Constipation**

Constipation is a common side effect of anesthesia and surgery, and even more common if you are also using opioid pain medication.

If you have a history of constipation or require opioid pain medications:

- Start your usual regimen: Begin taking your usual remedy (e.g., prune juice) immediately after surgery, if you haven't already
- Add Colace (aka stool softener)

If you don't have a usual regimen or develop constipation:

1. Start with Colace and Sennakot: Follow the dosage instructions on the bottle. This combination can take a couple days to work.
2. If no improvement after 3 days:
  - o Stop Colace and Sennakot.
  - o Start taking Milk of Magnesia. Follow the dosage instructions on the bottle.
3. If no improvement after 2 days:
  - o Stop Milk of Magnesia.
  - o Start taking Magnesium Citrate. Follow the dosage instructions on the bottle.

Important:

- It's safe to strain with bowel movements: Don't worry about straining during bowel movements after surgery.
- You're not alone: Many people experience constipation after hernia surgery - it may take time, but this too shall pass!

## **Incision**

The incisions are closed with dissolvable sutures under the skin– these do not need to be removed.

Your incisions are then covered with waterproof glue that acts as a bandage. There is no need to place a bandage over this, but you can if you have any drainage from the wound to protect your clothes or if you find it more comfortable to do so. The glue will fall off on its own in about 2 weeks.

Your incisions may become hard about 7-10 days after surgery. This is due to healing and is normal. This hardness will eventually soften and smooth out.

Bruising around incisions is normal after surgery. Many patients have used Arnica Montana, either as a gel or orally, to reduce swelling and bruising after surgery. Arnica is a safe, homeopathic medicine that works well in many patients. Most natural food stores will carry it.

## **Diet**

You may resume your regular diet as soon as you get home from your surgery. Know that it is possible to have sensitivity to fatty food after this surgery and you should consider reintroducing fatty food into your diet slowly over a period of weeks to months if you note that you have bloating or loose bowel movements with fatty food. If you note that you do have fatty food sensitivity and associated loose bowel movements, you may try adding fiber supplementation to your diet (metamucil or citrucel powder is best).

## **Bathing**

You may shower at any time after surgery. You do not need to cover your wounds.

Please avoid baths, hot tubs, pools, or soaking in water for 2 weeks after surgery, as this can increase your risk of an infection.

## **Activity**

Following surgery, you are encouraged to do as much physical activity as is comfortable. We recommend walking at a leisurely pace as much as possible. It is safe to resume normal activities so long as you start them slowly and stop if you notice sharp pain.

You may drive 24 hours after surgery if you feel up to it, as long as you are not taking any prescription pain medications. We typically recommend you avoid driving for 48-72 hours unless necessary.

## **Precautions**

Although not commonly seen, any incision is susceptible to infection. If you develop a fever of 101 degrees or above, have unexpected pain, redness or pus draining from the incision, please contact our office.

Your pain and swelling should gradually improve after the second or third postoperative day. If you have new, constant pain after feeling good for a couple of days, please contact our office.

## **Follow-up**

You will have a post-operative appointment scheduled between 3 and 5 weeks after surgery. If you do not see this scheduled, or if you need to reschedule, please contact our office.

## **Surgery recovery during cold and flu season**

The winter months bring lots of colds and sometimes the flu. If you find yourself needing to cough or sneeze, it's often helpful to place a pillow or your hand over your incisions. This provides some support and comfort, and will hopefully decrease your pain when you cough or sneeze. Sharp pain is not uncommon after a cough or sneeze, and lingering effects should resolve in a day or two.

## **Post-op FAQ:**

### **Will I be able to walk after surgery?**

Yes. We want everyone to walk after surgery. This helps reduce the risk of blood clots and pneumonia after surgery.

### **When can I shower after surgery?**

You may shower any time after surgery. There is waterproof glue over the incisions. You may continue to shower after the dressing is removed.

### **When should I take my dressing off?**

You have glue over your incisions with dissolvable stitches under the skin. You should leave this glue in place as long as it is well stuck in the area. If it peels up at the edges (usually 10-14 days after surgery), you may pull it off. Otherwise it will fall off on its own.

### **Can I put a bandaid over the steri-strips or glue?**

Sure. Some people find that a bandaid feels better. Sometimes a bandaid can help keep your clothes clean in the small chance a few drops of blood seep from under the incision.

### **When can I drive after surgery?**

You can drive anytime after 24 hours post-op, unless you are taking opioids for pain. You CANNOT drive if taking prescription opioids. We suggest waiting 24 full hours after your last dose of prescription pain medication before you drive. If you have not taken prescription medication or finished them, you may drive if you feel that you are able to.

### **Can I go up steps after my surgery?**

Yes. Please take steps slowly and one at a time at first but if you are feeling well, you may walk normally.

### **Can I lift a gallon of milk?**

Yes, as long as it doesn't cause you sharp pain at your incisions. If you are feeling good doing any activity, it is safe to proceed.

### **Can I bend down to tie my shoes after surgery?**

Yes, just move slowly at first.

### **Can I go for a long walk after surgery?**

Yes, we encourage it. Your body will tell you if you are straining your wounds too much with any activity in the form of sharp pain. Participating in activities that don't cause you pain is good for the recovery process.

### **When can I go for a run after surgery?**

You can go for a run as soon as you're feeling up to it.

**When can I resume sexual activity?**

You may resume sexual activity as long as you do not have pain at your incisions.

**When can I go back to work after surgery?**

You may go to work whenever you feel like, as long as your job does not require heavy lifting. Approximately 75% of our patients go to work within 3 days of surgery.

**When can I go back to the gym?**

You may return to the gym right away. Please use common sense and resume activity gradually, avoiding exercises that cause you pain at your incisions.

**How much pain will I have after surgery?**

Everyone is different! Some pain, of course, is expected. Most of our patients feel that Tylenol and ibuprofen are strong enough to take care of their pain.

**I have a low grade fever - should I be worried?**

A low grade fever is normal after having anesthesia. This is defined as a temperature less than 101F and should resolve within 24 to 48 hours. Please call the office if you have a fever greater than 101F or if it persists longer than 48 hours.

**Call the office if you have questions or concerns about your recovery: 617-466-3373**