



Laparoscopic Umbilical/Incisional/Ventral Hernia Post-op Instructions

To Do List:

- Take acetaminophen and ibuprofen (if allowed) tablets every 6 hours together for 2-5 days.
- Do not do anything strenuous for 2 weeks after surgery.
- You may shower at any time after surgery. There is either waterproof glue or a waterproof bandage over your incision.
- If you have glue over the incision, this glue will flake off over time. No bandages or dressing changes required.
- If you have a plastic bandage over your wound, remove outer dressing in 48 hours. The steri-strips (tape bandage) underneath should be left on. These will fall off on their own in about 2 weeks or will be removed at your post-op appointment.
- Please review the post op instructions below if you have questions.

Pain

Soreness and pain throughout the abdomen is normal after surgery. You may feel pain in spots further away from the hernia than you expected - this is due to the tacks that hold the mesh in place all the way around the edge of the mesh. This is normal and will get better with time. Pain will be worse with movement, changing positions from laying to seated to standing. This is normal and will go away over time.

Additionally, pain can extend into the shoulders - this pain is due to a small remaining amount of gas within your abdominal cavity. This gas was used to inflate your abdomen in order to do the surgery. While we try to vent all of this gas out at the end of the surgery it is impossible to get all of it out. This small amount of gas causes some irritation of the lining of the abdominal cavity and our brain sometimes translates this to pain in the shoulder. The gas dissipates on its own over 24-48 hours and nothing needs to be done. It will get better!

Most of our patients take only tylenol and ibuprofen for pain management after surgery. If you have been advised in the past not to take one of these medications, please follow those instructions. Applying ice to the surgery site for 20 minutes at a time can also be helpful.

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)

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:
 - Stop Milk of Magnesia.
 - 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!

Incisions

The incisions are closed with dissolvable sutures - these do not need to be removed.

You will either have surgical glue or a plastic bandage over your wound.

- If you have glue over the incision, this will fall off on its own 2-3 weeks after surgery. No dressing needs to be applied to this area.
- If you have a clear plastic bandage over your wound, this should be removed in 48 hours. You do not need to replace this bandage. The steri-strips (tape bandage) underneath should be left on. These will fall off on their own in about 2 weeks or will be removed at your post-op appointment.

Your incisions may feel hard about 7-10 days after surgery. This is due to scar tissue, and is a normal part of healing. This hardness will eventually soften and smooth out. Bruising and swelling around the surgery site is also normal and will resolve with time.

Some patients will feel a firm lump in the area where their hernia used to bulge. Most of the time this is fluid in this area - called a "seroma" - this will resolve within a few months.

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.

Bathing

You may shower at any time after surgery. There is either waterproof glue which can be left alone until the glue falls off around 2 weeks or a waterproof bandage over your incision. Once this bandage is removed (48 hours after surgery), you can continue to shower with the steri-strips over the incision. You do not need to put a new dressing over the top.

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 walking as is comfortable. You may climb stairs, taking them one at a time and slowly. We recommend walking at a leisurely pace for the first 2 weeks.

Avoid exercise, strenuous activity, lifting over 25lbs, and repetitive actions for 2 weeks after surgery. After 2 weeks, you may slowly resume these activities, but do so slowly and progressively, and listen to your body if it is telling you to stop or slow down.

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 drainage 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.

Hernia 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. It's very unlikely that the hernia will return as a result of this.

Post-op FAQ:

Will I be able to walk after surgery?

Yes. We want everyone to walk after surgery.

When can I shower after surgery?

You may shower the day after surgery. Your surgical glue is waterproof and does not need to be covered. If you have a bandage in place, this is also waterproof and should be removed in 48 hours when you can continue showering normally.

Why does my stomach look more bloated or full?

The combination of abdominal surgery and medications that you received during surgery slows down the intestine. This causes fluid and gas to build up in the abdomen which you will notice for the first few days after surgery. Be sure to drink fluids, take stool softeners if you are on prescription pain medications. The fullness will slowly go away during the first week after surgery and will be completely gone after 2-3 weeks in most people.

When should I take my dressing off?

Your surgical glue will fall off on its own within 2-3 weeks. If it is peeling up at the edges and seems to peel off easily, you may pull the glue off. Please do not pick at it before this time.

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.

Can I go up steps after my hernia surgery?

Yes. Please take steps slowly and one at a time.

Can I lift a gallon of milk?

Yes, as long as it's once or twice! You may lift up to 25 lbs as long as you are not performing many repetitive motions the first two weeks.

Can I bend down to tie my shoes after surgery?

Yes, just move slowly.

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 for a long walk after hernia surgery?

Yes, we encourage it. Just avoid strenuous hiking trails and don't wear a backpack.

When can I go for a run after surgery?

You can go for a run two weeks after hernia surgery.

When can I resume sexual activity?

You may resume sexual activity two weeks after hernia surgery.

When can I go back to work after hernia 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 two weeks after surgery. Please use common sense and resume activity gradually.

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.

How should I resume activity after hernia surgery?

We recommend that after 2 weeks you slowly resume all of your normal activity and exercises. This will differ from person to person. Start at about 50% of your normal exercise, and progressively increase this over a 1-2 week period of time. We typically recommend starting with aerobic exercises first (running, biking, hiking) before moving to strengthening exercises. As long as you progress over time and listen to your body on when to slow down, you will not damage the repair

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