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Division of General & Gastrointestinal Surgery

*PATIENT DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING*

## ABDOMINAL SURGERY

### DIET

- ✓ Unless otherwise directed, you may resume your regular diet.
- ✓ Drink plenty of fluids.
- ✓ Your appetite may be less than normal. Eat when you are hungry. Do not force yourself to eat! Concentrate on fluids. It is important to stay hydrated.

### ACTIVITY

- ✓ Do NOT drink alcohol, drive or operate heavy machinery for 24 hours after your surgery or while taking pain medication
- ✓ Do NOT do heavy lifting (nothing more than a gallon of milk) for 6 weeks after your surgery if you have an incision.
- ✓ Light activity (i.e. walking, office work, climbing stairs, etc.) as soon as you feel comfortable is fine. Sexual activity is fine as soon as you feel comfortable.
- ✓ You may feel fatigued for a few weeks after surgery. Take a nap when you feel tired. However, do NOT stay in bed all day. Make sure you walk around every two hours.
- ✓ Do NOT drive a car until you are off pain medication and can get in and out of a car comfortably.

### PAIN MANAGEMENT

We will supply you with a prescription for a mild narcotic pain medication. You are not required to take it. If you do take it, please do not drive or drink alcohol as these in combination may make you drowsy. Alternatively, you may take Tylenol (acetaminophen) or ibuprofen (e.g. Advil) as needed.

### MEDICATIONS

- ✓ Unless otherwise directed, you may resume your medications.
- ✓ If your blood count is low after surgery, you will receive prescriptions for iron(ferrous gluconate or ferrous sulfate) and a vitamin(folic acid). Take these pills as directed until they are gone. It is normal for iron to turn the stools black, and may cause constipation.
- ✓ If constipation occurs, Psyllium(i.e. Metamucil) is the best remedy(follow the directions on the package). If constipation persists more than 5 days, you may wish to take an ounce of milk of magnesia.

- ✓ If you were prescribed antibiotics, take them until they are finished.

#### INCISION CARE

- ✓ After 48 hours you do NOT need to keep a dressing on the wound.
- ✓ After 48 hours, you may shower or bathe as you like, unless you have a drain in place (do sponge baths for the first 48 hours).
- ✓ You may have some soreness in the wound area, which will disappear after a few weeks.
- ✓ Your surgeon probably will have used dissolvable sutures just beneath the skin, as this eliminates the need for removal. There will probably be “steri-strips”(little strips of tape) over the wound. These will fall off by themselves. If after 10 days they have not fallen off, you may remove them yourself.
- ✓ Some people have a little numbness around the wound after surgery. This is because tiny nerves under the skin are divided during surgery. Usually the sensation return over 6-12 months.
- ✓ After initial healing, your scar will be red and slightly raised. It will never completely disappear, but after a year, the area will flatten out and become less flesh colored.

#### WHEN TO CALL YOUR DOCTOR

- ✓ If you have an increase in pain over several days that is persistent.
- ✓ If you have new redness or swelling of the wound.
- ✓ If you have a sudden increase in wound drainage, especially if it is cloudy or has a foul odor.
- ✓ If you develop a fever  $>101^{\circ}$  F
- ✓ Persistent vomiting or diarrhea.

#### FOLLOW UP

- ✓ Please call the first business day after discharge to schedule a follow-up appointment.
- ✓ In case of emergencies, call your doctor’s office. If the office is closed, contact the hospital operator at **(617) 726-2000** and have your surgeon or the surgeon-on-call paged.