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Division of General & Gastrointestinal Surgery

*PATIENT DISCHARGE INSTRUCTIONS FOLLOWING*

## GASTRECTOMY

### DIET

- ✓ Before you are discharged, the nurse or dietician will discuss your diet.
- ✓ Most patients find a low-fat, bland diet are tolerated easily.
- ✓ Some patients may not be ready to eat solid food and may need to have nourishment get delivered through a tube.
- ✓ Be sure you get enough calories. If necessary, drink Ensure or Carnation Instant Breakfast.
- ✓ When you are ready to eat, you can expect that you will eat smaller and more frequent meals.
- ✓ In general, you need to eat more protein and less sugar, unless you have kidney dysfunction. You may also need to limit the amount of liquids you have with meals.

### 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
- ✓ 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 after your follow-up appointment.

### 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 constipation occurs, Psyllium (i.e. Metamucil) is the best remedy (follow the directions on the package. You may wish to take an ounce of milk of magnesia.
- ✓ If you were prescribed antibiotics, take them until they are finished.

- ✓ Vitamin B12 deficiency is expected after your stomach is removed. You will need to receive monthly vitamin B 12 injections.

### INCISION CARE

- ✓ Gently cleanse the area around the incision daily with mild soap and water.
- ✓ Change the dressing daily to keep the incision clean and dry. When the incision is sealed over and dry, you will not need a dressing.
- ✓ Loose fitting clothing may be more comfortable at first.
- ✓ You MAY take a shower, but avoid baths and saunas until your wounds are completely healed.

✓

### *Common Problems*

- ✓ Dumping Syndrome: This problem develops in some but not all patients. Food and liquids now enter the small intestine more quickly. This may cause uncomfortable symptoms such as nausea, fullness, cramping, sweating, weakness, or diarrhea. Changing your diet to avoid fats and carbohydrates usually prevents these symptoms.

### 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 has pus or 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.