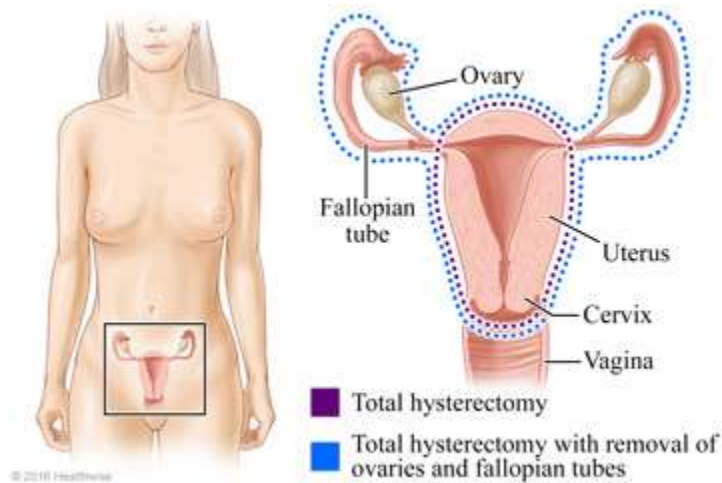


## AFTER YOUR HYSTERECTOMY

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### Your Recovery

An abdominal hysterectomy removes the uterus through a large cut (incision) in the belly. Your doctor made an incision in your lower belly and took out your uterus.

You can expect to feel better and stronger each day. But you might need pain medicine for a week or two. You may get tired easily or have less energy than usual. This may last for several weeks after surgery. You will probably notice that your belly is swollen and puffy. This is common. The swelling will take several weeks to go down. It may take about 4 to 6 weeks to fully recover.

It's important to avoid lifting while you are recovering so that you can heal.

### How can you care for yourself at home?

#### Activity



- Rest when you feel tired. Getting enough sleep will help you recover.
- Try to walk each day. Start by walking a little more than you did the day before. Bit by bit, increase the amount you walk. Walking boosts blood flow and helps prevent pneumonia and constipation.
- **Avoid lifting anything that would make you strain. This may include a child, heavy grocery bags and milk containers, a heavy briefcase or backpack, cat litter or dog food bags, or a vacuum cleaner.**
- Avoid strenuous activities, such as biking, jogging, weight lifting, or aerobic exercise, until your doctor says it is okay.
- You may shower. Pat the cut (incision) dry. Do not take a bath for the first 2 weeks, or until your doctor tells you it is okay. **REMOVE THE SMALL TAPES OVER YOUR INCISION WITHIN 1 WEEK OF THE SURGERY**
- You will probably need to take 2 to 4 weeks off from work. It depends on the type of work you do and how you feel.

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### • NO SEX FOR 6-8 WEEKS AFTER SURGERY



#### Diet

- You can eat your normal diet. If your stomach is upset, try bland, low-fat foods like plain rice, broiled chicken, toast, and yogurt.
- **Drink plenty of fluids** (unless your doctor tells you not to).
- You may notice that your bowel movements are not regular right after your surgery. This is common. Try to avoid constipation and straining with bowel movements. You may want to take a fiber supplement every day. If you have not had a bowel movement after a couple of days, ask your doctor about taking a mild laxative.



#### Medicines

- Be safe with medicines. Take pain medicines exactly as directed.
  - If the doctor gave you a prescription medicine for pain, take it as prescribed.
  - If you are not taking a prescription pain medicine, ask your doctor if you can take an over-the-counter medicine.
- If your doctor prescribed antibiotics, take them as directed. Do not stop taking them just because you feel better. You need to take the full course of antibiotics.
- If you think your pain medicine is making you sick to your stomach:
  - Take your medicine after meals (unless your doctor has told you not to).
  - Ask your doctor for a different pain medicine.



#### Incision care

- If you have strips of tape on the cut (incision) the doctor made, leave the tape on for a week or until it falls off – REMOVE the TAPE WITHIN 1 WEEK OF SURGERY
- Wash the area daily with warm, soapy water, and pat it dry. **Don't use hydrogen peroxide or alcohol, which can slow healing.** You may cover the area with a gauze bandage if it weeps or rubs against clothing. Change the bandage every day.
- Keep the area clean and dry.



#### Other instructions

- You may have some light vaginal bleeding. Wear sanitary pads if needed. Do not douche or use tampons.

**CALL THE OFFICE TO SCHEDULE AN APPOINTMENT in 4 WEEKS FROM DATE OF SURGERY OR AS DIRECTED BY YOUR PHYSICIAN**

## When should you call for help?

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**Call 911** anytime you think you may need emergency care. For example, call if:

- You passed out (lost consciousness).
- You have chest pain, are short of breath, or cough up blood.

**Call your doctor now** or seek immediate medical care if:

- You have pain that does not get better after you take pain medicine.
- You cannot pass stools or gas.
- You have vaginal discharge that has increased in amount or smells bad.
- You are sick to your stomach or cannot drink fluids.
- You have loose stitches, or your incision comes open.
- Bright red blood has soaked through the bandage over your incision.
- **You have signs of infection, such as:**
  - **Increased pain, swelling, warmth, or redness.**
  - **Red streaks leading from the incision.**
  - **Pus draining from the incision.**
  - **A fever.**
- You have bright red vaginal bleeding that soaks one or more pads in an hour, or you have large clots.

**This is a general guidance document to help convey important information but does not replace common sense or supersede the guidance given by your physician. We wish you a speedy recovery.**