

Postoperative Anorectal Surgery Instructions

The Colorectal Care Center of South Florida

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Post-Operative Instructions for Patients

The post-operative period following ano-rectal surgery can be painful and uncomfortable. Each person is different and experiences that you hear from friends, family members or read on the Internet may be totally unlike your experience. The one thing that is certain is that after a few weeks you will feel much better than you do immediately after the surgery. Some people have a gradual recovery during which each day feels progressively better than the next. For others it will be more uneven with some good days and some bad days initially before the good outnumber the bad. You may feel great in the morning and much worse at the end of the day (or just the opposite.) Some patients report small improvement for the first couple of weeks and then all of a sudden one day they wake up feeling much better.

Immediately Following the Surgery

After the operation you will be taken to our recovery room where you should only have ice chips until you are to urinate. This is to prevent over-distention of the bladder. After you urinate, you are urged to drink plenty of liquids. You may eat whenever you have the urge.

Surgical Dressings

You can remove the outer dressing approximately six hours after you get home. Although it will likely feel uncomfortable, it is important that you do not remove the pack within your rectum and let it just come out naturally with your first bowel movement. Ordinarily this will take place on the second or third day following your surgery.

Bowel Movements

Bowel movements will not be easy at first but they will get easier. Try your best to relax and strain moderately; some pushing is required but excessive strain can damage the incisions. It's normal to feel nervous about having about a bowel movement after this surgery but don't ignore the urge to go. For the first few days you may experience minor bleeding or muscle spasms during bowel movements. Some swelling in the area, which can feel like an unpassed stool or a newly formed hemorrhoid, is not unusual. The more water you drink, the better. At a minimum you should have at least eight glasses of water daily. **Do not use laxatives.**

Initially the stools may be only thumb size and one or two stools daily is normal. If there is no bowel movement by the third day after surgery, you can take 2-4 Docolax tablets and/or a Fleets enema in the green bottle (available over-the-counter.) If that still doesn't produce results, please call our office. Remember that loose stools or diarrhea can cause more harm to the incisions than constipation. Stool softeners such as Surfak taken twice daily as well as bulk fiber such as Metamucil (one tablespoon taken daily each morning and evening) can be helpful. These products are available over the counter at your pharmacy.

Hygiene

The area around your anus will feel swollen and tender. Sitting in a warm sitz bath will help you feel much better and these should be taken two or three times as day as well as after each bowel movement. The bowel movements will be uncomfortable at first and the sitz bath eases the discomfort. Immediately following the sitz bath, pat the area dry with a towel or cloth and then place a dry cotton ball or sanitary napkin over the area. Keeping a clean, dry pad or sanitary napkin over the anal opening at all times is important and it should be changed regularly during the day.

Tuck's pads may be used to wipe anal area after bowel movements and provide some relief. Some patients find it helpful to take a sitz bath immediately after the bowel movement and then use the Tuck's pad after the sitz bath. Do not leave the Tuck's

pads in place and avoid using ointments, creams and soaps on the area. Individually wrapped Tuck's pads are available and may come in handy as you get out of the house and begin to return to your normal routine. Soon the day will come when you'll have no need for these.

Diet

Eat your regular diet including fresh or cooked fruits, vegetables and meat. Prunes and apricots can help soften stools and might be a good choice for breakfast. Dairy products and rice often cause constipation and should be avoided. When having fresh fruits and vegetables be aware that rough particles (such as corn, popcorn, berries, seeds, nuts, etc.) may get caught in the incisions and cause irritation. Also, spicy and greasy/fried foods may should be kept to a minimum as they too can lead to more irritation.

Postoperative follow up

When leaving the hospital, the nurse will give you your prescriptions. Please call our office to arrange your follow up appointment (305-858-1515), generally scheduled for 2-4 weeks after your surgery.

Getting Back to Normal

Each person has a different course of recovery. When you feel like walking around, do so. If you want to get out of the house, go ahead. Exercise is beneficial but you should avoid heavy lifting and swimming pools for the first two weeks. Getting into your regular routine can be helpful in taking your mind off the discomfort from the surgery so when you feel up to it, which may be a few days or sometimes much longer, get back to work or your other daily activities. You'll probably find that focusing your mind on something other than how you feel is a big help to the recovery process. When you're back on the job, take it easy for the first few days. You've been through a difficult surgery and it will take some time—up to a couple of months—before you'll really feel completely healed.

Now that it's over you certainly don't want to go through this again. Keep drinking plenty of liquids and make high-fiber foods a regular part of your diet. Regular exercise can help prevent constipation and it's also great for your overall health. Choose an activity you enjoy so you stick with it at least a few times each week. Be careful not to start straining again at your stools. Take the reading material out of your bathroom. When you feel the urge to go, head for the toilet. If you sit down and nothing passes, just get up. We don't want to see you back here except for your check-up!

When to Call Us

- If you don't have a bowel movement by the fourth day after surgery even after taking Docolax tablet laxative and/or a Fleets enema.
- If excessive bleeding (1/2 cup or more) occurs. Remember slight bleeding with and after bowel movements may continue for a month or more. Excessive bleeding may require immediate medical attention. You may call our office 24 hours a day and get assistance for any urgent matters.
- **Please note that in a truly life threatening emergency you should call 911 or go to the nearest emergency facility.**
- If you have any other questions or concerns, we're here to help.
- You may reach us 24/7 at 305-858-1515



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of South Florida, LLC