

Sacramento Colon & Rectal Surgery Medical Group

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Aftercare Instructions for Open Surgery

On your Colon/Rectum

If you experience any of the following, please call us or go to the emergency room:

- *Uncontrollable nausea, vomiting, or if you are unable to keep liquids down
- *Worsening or severe abdominal pain or bloating
- *A measured temperature of 100.5 degrees or higher or severe chills
- *If you pass large amounts of bright red blood and/or blood clots with your stool
- *Redness, swelling, warmth around your surgery incisions
- *Pain, redness, swelling in your leg or arm
- *Experience Rapid onset Shortness of Breath or Chest Pain

Follow-up Appointment

*It is important that you schedule a 10-14 day follow up if you have staples that need to be removed from your wound. Otherwise, please schedule a 3-4 week follow up appointment to be seen after your surgery. If you don't receive a call from our office within 3 days of being discharged from the hospital, please call our office to schedule this appointment.

Activity After Surgery

*It is important for you to be active after your surgery. You should be up and walking around your house and in your neighborhood at least 5 times per day. Start with short distances and times, similar to the walks that you were taking in the hospital. As you regain your strength, you can increase your distance and time spent walking. Your energy level will commonly decrease after surgery. You may tire easily after short walks or feel the need to nap during the day. This is normal and energy levels can take 6-8 weeks to return to your normal before surgery.

*You should avoid strenuous activities and lifting anything more than 10 lbs. for 6 weeks after surgery to decrease the risk of developing a hernia at one of your incisions. It is okay to bend and climb stairs. You may want the assistance of another person until you feel confident and steady on your feet. When getting

up out of bed or from a flat/reclined position, you may want to use your side abdominal muscles instead of your front abdominal muscles to minimize pain/discomfort at your incisions with movement. If you were given an abdominal binder to wear at the hospital, please wear this at home as well.

Diet After Surgery

*You can follow a regular diet as tolerated. You may want to avoid difficult to digest foods, such as raw fruits and vegetables, for the first week as these may make you feel bloated early after surgery. Be sure to chew your food well, making it like mush in your mouth before you swallow to help with digestion and passage through your gut and surgery area. You should aim to drink at least 48-64 oz. of water throughout the day to keep yourself hydrated and help with digestion after surgery.

Wound Care and Showering After Surgery

*Typically, you will have skin staples on your incisions. It is okay to shower and get these incisions wet. Do not scrub your incisions. You can allow soap and water to run over the incisions. Avoid baths and swimming for about 6 weeks after surgery. The staples will be removed in the office 10-14 days after surgery.

*If you have an open wound after surgery (for instance, if you had an ileostomy bag or colostomy bag closed/reversed), you can remove the dressing before your shower. It is okay to allow soap and water to run over the wound, but do not scrub the wound. After your shower, pat the area dry with your towel and place a new piece of gauze over the wound and secure it to the area with tape. You can change the dressing as needed between showers if it gets soaked with fluid or becomes dirty. As the wound heals and gets smaller, the discharge will become less. You will need to change the bandage less often and can eventually switch to using Band-Aids instead.

Pain Management After Surgery

*Pain is expected after surgery. You can take extra strength Tylenol/acetaminophen, ibuprofen, Advil, Motrin, or Aleve as needed for pain. If this does not control your pain, you can take any prescribed opioid pain medications that will likely include oxycodone, hydrocodone, or tramadol. Be sure to tell your doctor if you have had any allergies or reactions to these medications in the past. The prescribed pain medication may also include Tylenol/acetaminophen, so be sure that you do not take more than 4000 mg per day as it may affect your liver. The prescribed pain medication is written to last for 5-7 days after surgery if taken as prescribed. Take it as directed and do not exceed the recommended dose. Ensure that you take the medication with food in your stomach to limit nausea and vomiting. Dizziness, lightheadedness, drowsiness are also common side effects. **Do not drive, operate machinery, or make important decisions while taking these medications.**

*To minimize constipation while taking opioid pain medication, you should be on a stool softener. You can take Colace (docusate/DSS) which may be prescribed but is also available over the counter. You can also take Miralax (available over the counter) 1 adult dose daily. If you find yourself having loose stools, you can stop these medications.

If you have an ileostomy bag (not colostomy bag), here are some additional instructions:

*The output will tend to be more liquid/watery in the first 1-2 months as your intestines adjust and start to absorb more water. You can help with this by eating starchy foods such as mashed potatoes, pasta, rice, white bread, and bananas. Also, try to avoid drinking liquids alone. Have some starchy food before drinking the liquid. This will slow down the liquid so that it doesn't just pass through your intestines without getting absorbed. If you feel that you are passing a lot of liquidy/watery fluid (output is more than 1500 ml in 24 hours), try the above recommendations and be sure to drink fluids with electrolytes (Gatorade, Powerade, Pedialyte). **If you are feeling weak, dizzy, light-headed, nauseated or having cramping in your stomach, this can be due to severe dehydration, and we ask that you call our office or go to the emergency room as soon as possible. You may need to be admitted to the hospital and given IV fluids.**

If you have any other questions or concerns not addressed by this, please call us or send your doctor a message through the Sutter My Health Online portal.