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Surgeons of Northern Illinois

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MAJOR ABDOMINAL SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

1. At your discharge from the hospital your incision probably will be well closed but you may still have staples, steri-strips, glue or bandages in place. Staples will need to be removed in the office one to two weeks after your surgery and you should call to make this appointment. Steri-strips will fall off in seven days or will be removed at your follow-up visit. Surgical glue will flake off slowly over a number of weeks. You will receive instructions at the hospital regarding your bandages. For example, when to remove them, when you can shower, etc. If you did not receive these instructions, please call our office for clarification.
2. Continue to take your pain medicine as directed. This is not a contest to see who can put up with the most pain. It is important to be active after major surgery to prevent blood clots from forming and pain medications may make this activity possible. **DO NOT DRIVE** until you are off prescription pain pills (Advil & Motrin are OK), and are able to perform emergency maneuvers without thinking twice. This may take up to two weeks after major surgery. We certainly don't want to perform a successful major operation only to have you be injured in an automobile accident soon after.
3. Again, try to be as active as possible. You may go up and down stairs and walk as much as you feel like. Do not lift anything heavier than a phone book or newspaper for 6 weeks, unless otherwise instructed. Light housework is okay, but heavy lifting or straining must be avoided to allow your incision to get stronger.
4. You should be able to resume your normal diet after surgery. It is best to limit fat intake and to increase fiber.
5. Many patients have changes in their bowel habits after major surgery. These may range from constipation to diarrhea and have multiple causes. If the problem is mild, "over-the-counter" laxatives such as Milk of Magnesia or anti-diarrhea medicine like Imodium AD can be tried. If the problem is severe or persists, please contact the office.
6. Although we would not expect any serious problems after your discharge, complications do sometimes occur. The signs and symptoms to watch for are persistent fever (usually over 100.5), redness and swelling, or drainage from the incision, and increasing pain which is not relieved with pain pills. If you suspect you have a fever, it is important to take your temperature. If any of these occur, you should call the office as soon as possible.
7. Please call the office to set up a follow-up appointment for about one week after your discharge. Depending on the nature of your surgery, more follow-up may be required. It is important that you become informed about the recommendations for follow-up because this may be performed by your primary care physician. We will try to provide you with a written copy of the recommended follow-up for your condition, and if you ever have any questions about this, please call the office for clarification.
8. **DO NOT HESITATE TO CALL IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR PROBLEMS.**