

POST-OPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS FOR ABDOMINAL HYSTERECTOMY

What can I expect after an abdominal hysterectomy?

Usual length of stay in hospital:

In most instances, you will be admitted to the hospital on the day of your operation, after your procedure. Most women are able to go home between 1-2 days after their operation.

Stitches and dressings:

Your incision will be closed by stitches, staples, clips or glue. Glue and some stitches, dissolve by themselves. Other stitches, clips or staples need to be removed. This is usually done 7-10 days after surgery. You will be given information about this.

Initially, your incision will be covered with a dressing. You should be able to take this off at approximately 5 days after your operation and have a shower (see section on washing and showering).

Any stitches in your vagina will not need to be removed as they are dissolvable. You may notice a stitch or part of a stitch coming away after a few days or maybe up to a few weeks. This is normal and nothing to worry about. It usually occurs with the stitches on the surface of your skin.

Vaginal Bleeding:

You can expect to have some vaginal bleeding for 1-2 weeks after you surgery. This should be like a light period and red or brown in blood. Some women have little or no bleeding initially and have a sudden gush of old blood or fluid approximately 10 days later. This usually stops quickly. You should use sanitary pads rather than tampons, as using tampons can increase the risk of infection.

Pain and discomfort:

You can expect pain and discomfort in your lower abdomen for at least the first few days after your surgery. When leaving the hospital, you should be provided with painkillers for the pain you are experiencing. If you are prescribed painkillers, which contain narcotics, these can make you sleepy, slightly sick and constipated. If you need to take these medications, try to eat extra

fruit and fiber, to reduce the chance of becoming constipated. PEG 3350 can be used as a stool softener, 17gm daily mixed in any fruit juice.

Taking painkillers as prescribed to reduce your pain and enable you to get out of bed sooner, stand up straight and move around, all of which will speed up your recovery and help to prevent the formation of blood clots in your legs and lungs.

Washing and shower:

You should be able to have a shower the following day and pat your dressing dry. Don't worry about getting your scar wet, just ensure that you pat it dry and clean with disposable tissues or let it air dry. Keeping the scar clean and dry helps with the healing. You can bath after 7 days.

When should I seek Medical Advice:

While most women recover well after an abdominal hysterectomy, complications can occur, as with any other surgery. You should seek medical advice from your surgeon's office and if they are closed, Nanaimo Regional General Hospital, if you are experiencing the following:

- Burning and stinging when you pass urine frequently
- Heavy or smell vaginal bleeding or bleeding, which starts up again. If you are feeling unwell and have a temperature (fever), accompanied by chills and nausea, you may have an infection
- Red and painful skin around the incision: this may be caused by wound infection.
- Increasing abdominal pain: if you have a temperature, have lost your appetite and have elevated nausea, painful, red, swollen, hot leg or difficulty bearing weight on your legs.

Around the house:

For the first 1-2 weeks, you should restrict lifting to light loads such as 1 litre water bottle, kettle or small saucepans. You should not lift heavy objects, such as full shopping bags or children or do any strenuous housework like vacuuming, until 4-6 weeks after your surgery, as this may factor how you heal internally. Try getting down to your children rather than lifting them up to you. If you feel pain, you should try doing a little less for another few days.