

Post Operative Instructions

Abdominoplasty (Tummy Tuck surgery)

The goal is to make your surgical experience and recovery as comfortable as possible. Please call us with any questions or concerns.

Please review the following recommendations for postoperative care and the other written and verbal information you have received from your doctor. You play an active and essential role in your recovery process. It is our pleasure to assist you and care for you at any time.

Medications:

You will receive medications for pain (Narcotic), a muscle relaxant (Flexeril), and a stool softener.

- IF YOU LIVE ALONE, ARRANGE FOR SOMEONE TO STAY OVERNIGHT AFTER SURGERY
- DO NOT drive or operate machinery the first week after surgery
- DO NOT drink alcoholic beverages for 72 hours after surgery
- DO NOT make major decisions, sign contracts, etc. for 24 hours after surgery.

Swelling/Discoloration:

After this type of procedure, the abdomen is usually swollen and may show noticeable bruising. Most swelling usually resolves quickly over 5 days, while the discoloration will diminish more gradually over 10-14 days. You may notice that one part of the abdomen will be slightly more or less swollen than the other – this is normal and is not a cause of concern.

What to Expect:

The feeling of tightness is normal. After surgery, you will be “sore” and unable to move very quickly. You may not be able to stand up completely or lie flat in bed immediately. You must position yourself in a “jack knife or beach chair” position for the first week after surgery. While lying down, prop both your upper body and your lower legs up on pillows and while standing or walking, do so while bending at the hip. You may be more comfortable in a recliner or on the couch right after surgery, but do not lie flat, since undo pressure will be placed on your incisions.

There will be two drains in your abdomen. You will need to empty and “strip” the tubing of these drains at least every 12 hours, but I recommend 4-6 times per day. Record the drainage in ml (cc's) as marked on the side of the drain bulb or measuring cup daily. You will be shown before leaving how to record and strip the drains. The drains will be

removed when the drainage has decreased to around 20 ml (cc's) or less per day for 3 consecutive days.

The following are some recommendations directed at relieving discomfort and speeding the recovery process:

1. The first week you will need to rest frequently, but it is important to walk around the house as tolerated in frequent intervals.
2. Avoid stairs if possible.
3. You will not be able to stand up straight for the first week. It will be normal to walk at a 45-degree angle bent at the hips. Your back may become sore in this position. You may try to stand up straight after the first week as tolerated.
4. For the first week post-op sleep on your back with your head elevated and knees bent with a pillow underneath them. This will keep the tension off the incision in your abdomen. Do not sleep on your side.
5. Every 2-3 hours take deep breaths and force your self to cough to expand your lungs. Hold your incision (put pressure) with a pillow while coughing. Perform this activity at least 4-6 times per day.
6. Do not pick-up anything greater than 1-2 lbs the first 2 weeks. The doctor will advise you when you can start lifting anything heavier.
7. Do not exercise until the doctor says you may do so.
8. Do not drive the first week or while you are taking pain medication. After that it will depend on your ability to handle a car without causing any discomfort. You should wear your seatbelt at all times.
9. Do not engage in sexual activity for at least 2-3 weeks after your surgery.
10. No smoking or being around smoke at least the first 2 weeks after your surgery. This will interfere with the healing process.

Nausea rarely occurs following abdominoplasty; however, if you should experience nausea, please call us immediately. Anti-nausea medication may need to be prescribed, and although this will provide relief for the nausea, it may cause you to feel drowsy and dizzy.

Pain:

As mentioned above, the pain medication prescribed will decrease the pain substantially but may make you drowsy and dizzy. You may experience a dull ach and tightness in the abdomen, but it is very unusual to have significant, sharp pain. Do not apply cold compresses to relief pain, this can compromise the blood supply to the skin. Under no circumstances should ASPIRIN, MOTRIN, ALEVE, ETC. and/or any medications containing aspirin or salicylates be taken. If you are not sufficiently relieved of pain, try alternating doses of extra strength Tylenol and the pain medication prescribed by your doctor. Try alternating the muscle relaxant with your pain medication. If you have

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increasing abdominal pain not relieved by the pain medication, please inform your doctor.

Temperature:

Generally, the body temperature does not rise much above 100.4 degrees following a surgical procedure. A rise in temperature is an appropriate part of the healing process. You can check your temperature if you feel that your temperature might be elevated only after 24 hours from surgery. If you have a persistent fever above 101.5 degrees that is not relieved by Tylenol, call our office.

Bleeding:

If you experience oozing or bleeding along the suture line, do not rub the areas but apply gentle pressure to the area using a gauze pad. It is normal to ooze for a few days after the procedure, please inform your doctor if its not stopping after 3 days or if the fluid is a significant amount.

Diet:

Eat light the first 24 hours, clear liquids advancing to a regular diet as tolerated the following day. If you have persistent nausea stick to a bland diet until it subsides. Avoid foods that can cause a lot of gas. This can cause abdominal distention and undue discomfort. Small frequent meals are best. The pain medicine may cause constipation. Drink plenty of fluids. You may take any over the counter laxative as needed.

Some suggestions to ease abdominal discomfort or indigestion after surgery:

1. Drink a lot of water- 8 glasses a day!
2. Drink warm liquids (tea or coffee).
3. Prune juice for constipation.
4. If severely constipated use Colace (2 tabs in a.m. and p.m. taken with one glass of warm water), and fleet enemas (regular or oil retention) as a last resort.

Dressings:

You will have an abdominal binder (compression garment) over your abdominal dressings. You do not need to change them. You should wear the binder at all times for 8 weeks after surgery.

1. Please remove the dressings 48 hours after surgery
2. There will be steri-strips in place, leave them alone as they will fall off on their own.
3. It is normal to have numbness over the surgical sites for several weeks or months.
4. Do not use a heating pad or cold compression around the surgical sites. It could cause necrosis of the skin.
5. You may not shower the first 48 hours - sponge bath only, until dressings are removed in 48 hours. Then you may shower and let the soapy water run down the incisions. DO NOT SOAK IN A BATHTUB OR GO SWIMMING for 2 weeks.

6. It is normal to see dried bloody drainage on the abdominal binder or dressings.
7. You will have 2 drains in your abdomen, which may stay in for 1-2 weeks. Please follow drain care instruction sheet and bring it to your follow up appointments.

Resuming Activities:

1. You should start going back to normal activities after 2 weeks. Start slowly and remember not to push yourself.
2. Continue to RESTRICT LIFTING of heavy objects. You may lift up to about 15 pounds in week three and about 20 pounds in week four.
3. Continue wearing your abdominal binder or compression garment for 8 weeks. Can be removed to shower only, but you must wear to work, and sleep with it every day.
4. You may begin driving if both drains are out, and no longer taking narcotics, but start slowly. Eventually you will be back to your usual routine.
5. We discourage cardio or any heavy exercises for 8 weeks and weight training for 3 months. All exercises should be done with a controlled tight core. It is easy to gain weight during this time so eat healthy and check your weight regularly.
6. PERSONAL GROOMING. In order to improve and speed wound healing, we recommend the following:
 - You may SHOWER starting the second day after surgery, allowing indirect flow of warm water to wash over the wounds. (Do not let the water directly strike the wound and do not immerse or soak the wound.)
7. HOUSEHOLD ACTIVITIES. On your first postoperative day, you are encouraged to be up and around the house with your usual activities except those specifically outlined previously (no heavy lifting, etc). No strenuous activity.
8. REDUCE EXPOSURE TO SUNLIGHT. Following surgery the incisions may be more sensitive to sunlight for up to one year. The incision will darken and be more noticeable if exposed to sun. Wearing sun block (minimum of SPF 50) is recommended and protecting incisions with clothing as much as possible.
9. RETURNING TO WORK AND RESUMING SOCIAL ACTIVITIES. When you return to work depends on the amount of physical activity and public contact your job involves and also the amount of swelling and discoloration you develop; the average person is ready to return to work or go out socially after drains are out, in 7-14 days following surgery.

Scars:

During the first several days following surgery, the scars will be imperceptible. They then go through a period of slight swelling and reddening, which can last months. As this subsides, the scars become virtually invisible again, but this might take at least one year. This is the normal maturity process of scars. Any unevenness of the edges of the incisions or lumpiness of the scars is usually temporary and will subside with the passage of time. Again protect the incision from sunlight for 1 year after surgery. Sunlight will darken the incision and be more noticeable.

Your postoperative office visit:

Sutures are internal and generally take weeks to months for your body to absorb them AFTER YOUR SURGERY. Generally you will be asked to return to the office for follow-up at 1 week, 2 weeks, 8 weeks, 6 months, and 1 year post-op. Please arrange your schedule to accommodate these appointments, which we urge you to make immediately following surgery.

Summary:

- Do not be discouraged by swelling and discoloration. These conditions are a normal part of the abdominoplasty procedure and will subside with time.
- Call our office if you experience:
 - Sudden swelling or increased discoloration (redness) on your skin
 - Any progressive increasing abdominal pain not relived by medications
 - Persistent temperature above 101.5 degrees that is not relieved by Tylenol.

Your recovery and ultimate result is very important to us. Please read this handout carefully and keep it readily accessible as a reference after your surgery.

If you have ANY questions or problems not addressed in this handout, please do not hesitate to contact us at our office at (305) 203-3938 during the day, after normal business hours or on weekends. Dr. Daniel Calva's cell phone is (305) 814-9582.