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ADBOMINOPLASTY AFTER CARE INSTRUCTIONS

THINGS TO PURCHASE by day #3:

1. ABD pads or large maxi pads→These will help to absorb any fluid that may be seeping from the incisions (which is normal)
2. Non-stick pads for incisions if necessary→These will help to protect incisions from rubbing on clothing.
3. Compression garments: See photos below for examples of garments. You should purchase two of each either online, at any medical supply store, or any department store.
4. Stool softener (Ducolax, Miralax, or Metamucil)—Pain medication can constipate you.



GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS:

- After surgery, please have someone available to stay with you for the first 24 – 48 hours, as you will be weak and drowsy.
- It is important to get out of bed early and often after your surgery (with assistance) to prevent postoperative problems. It is good to walk for 15 – 20 minutes 6 times per day.
- It is important to walk slightly “stooped over” (bent at the hips) for 7 – 10 days to release tension on the suture lines. Eventually you will notice you can stand straighter each day.
- Take pain medication with food. You will be given an anti-anxiety/muscle relaxant medication (Valium) that you may take as well to prevent aggravation of the pain cycle. When taking Valium, take it 1 – 2 hours after the pain medication.
- **Take a stool softener with pain medication** to prevent constipation (like Ducolax which is sold over-the-counter)
- **DO NOT SMOKE.** This is very important!!!
 - Smoking can result in a lack of blood supply to tissues and fat causing tissue death or delayed wound healing. Even 0% nicotine vapes contain a trace amount of nicotine that the FDA accepts as 0%. Smoking can resume 6 weeks after surgery as long as no challenges in healing are present.
- Do not drive while taking pain medication.
- Do not take aspirin (or products containing aspirin) or Ibuprofen (Advil, Motrin, Midol) for 3 weeks after surgery. Also do not begin herbal supplements until 3 weeks after surgery.
- If compression stockings were provided, please leave the compression stockings on for 5 days after surgery. They may be removed when showering but must be replaced after. You can also purchase additional compression socks at Target if needed.
- **Remember the Five W's:**
 - ***Wind:*** Take 10 deep breaths per hour. The most common cause of fever / elevated temperature after surgery is due to collapse of the lungs (atelectasis). In order to decrease your body temperature and expand the lungs, it is important to do this exercise.
 - ***Water:*** Dehydration can also cause an increase in body temperature. It is important that you remain hydrate since abdominoplasty and liposuction deplete your body of water.
 - ***Walk:*** Get up and walk once every hour to keep your blood moving. This is key for preventing a blood clot.
 - ***Wonder drugs:*** Take your pain medication as needed. If 1 tablet is not sufficient, then take 2 tablets every 4 or 6 hours (of Percocet, Vicodin, Norco).
 - ***Wound:*** Observe the wound for redness, heat, discharge (pus), and openings.
- It's recommended that you purchase maxi pads or ABD pads (absorbent pads) in case you are leaking from your incision sites which may happen (and is very normal).

SLEEPING:

- While resting in bed, keep a pillow under your legs and at least 2 – 3 pillows behind your back. This position minimizes the tension upon your new abdominal closure.
- Sleep on your back with your hips flexed in a reclining chair position. Keep your head elevated about 30 degrees and leave your knees slightly flexed. These instructions aid in the quality of your scar. Sleep in this position for 4 – 6 weeks.
- You may resume side sleeping or sleeping flat on your back after 4 – 6 weeks.

SHOWERING:

- You may shower (but not bathe) in 3 days or when your pain pump is removed, even if drains are intact.

- Remove all your garments and dressings (except for the yellow sticky gauze) when showering. When out of the shower, blow dry incisions on a cool setting and apply new dressings and usual garments.
- Make sure someone is with you at your first shower.
- Wait until pain pump is removed to shower (after third day).

DIET:

- A light diet is best after surgery. Begin by taking liquids slowly and progress to soups or Jell-O. You may start a regular diet the next day.
- Though it is impossible to get rid of gas entirely, there are strategies to reduce it. Eat and drink slowly, chew thoroughly and cut down on carbonated drinks. Avoid sugar-free gums and sugar-free candies that contain sorbitol or xylitol – both sweeteners are poorly digested.
- Stay on a soft diet, high in protein, for 2-3 days and avoid spicy food which can cause nausea and gas. Then you may resume a normal, high protein diet.

DRAINS AND SUTURES:

- Keep your drainage bulbs collapsed and record time and amounts of drainage over a 24-hour period. All patients heal differently according to many factors. Generally, the drains will be removed when the drainage is 25 cc or less in a 24-hour period, which usually occurs in 7 – 14 days. Please see drain instruction sheet for details.
- Sutures are dissolvable. Suture ends (the portion of the dissolvable suture that is visible on the skin, the loop) will be removed in 7 days. Sutures on the belly button are not dissolvable and will be removed between 12-14 days.
- 3 weeks after all sutures have been removed, you can begin scar treatment:
 - All incisions will be extremely sensitive to sunlight during the healing phase. Direct sun contact or tanning booths are to be avoided and use a sunscreen with SPF of 15 with UVA and UVB protection for at least 6 months.
 - Incision scars can be massaged with the scar therapy cream (like Biocorneum sold here) starting at week 3. This will promote early softening and maturation of these areas. You can also use silicone sheeting (i.e., Embrace Scar Away) which can be placed over incision sites to promote healing.

BINDER:

- Wear a binder (compression garment)...
 - Continuously for 2 weeks. You can take it off to shower after 3 days.
 - Switch to SPANX or similar **abdominal compression garment** for an additional 6 weeks (they can be purchased online by typing “abdominal compression garment” on Google or at any medical supply store)
 - Often times patients like to wear a muscle shirt or cami under the white compression binder provided to prevent rashes or itchy skin.



EXERCISE:

- No overheating for the first three weeks (no hot baths, showers, spas, exercising in the sun, etc). For the first 10 days following surgery, raising your blood pressure (heart rate) will cause bleeding. This includes sexual intercourse and sexual activity.
- Abdominal stress on your muscles will stretch or break the sutures if you exercise before 4 weeks. At 4 weeks, you should consider passive or less vigorous sexual activity that will not cause abdominal movement.
- Do not lift anything heavier than 10 lbs for the first 6 weeks.
- Abdominal muscle exercises are discouraged for 3 months after surgery to protect the abdominal wall plication suture.
- You may begin swimming 4 weeks post-operatively, if healing is complete.

WHAT TO EXPECT:

- Moderate swelling of your abdomen is to be expected. You may find that your clothes may not fit as easily as before. Be patient. The swelling will gradually subside and you will be back to normal in 3 - 6 months.
- Because of the removal of tissue from your abdomen, there is a certain amount of tightness that is to be expected. This will slowly relax within 6 months.
- Infrequently after surgery, you may have fluid in the abdomen after the drains are removed. If this happens, you will notice a fullness or sloshy feeling in your abdomen. Please contact our office so we can aspirate it easily.
- Some suggestions to ease abdominal discomfort or indigestion after surgery:
 - Drink a lot of water – 8 glasses a day!
 - Drink warm liquids (tea or coffee)
 - Prune juice for mild constipation
 - If severely constipated use Miralax first as it is a mild but effective laxative, Phillips Milk of Magnesia, Colace stool softeners, and fleet enemas (regular or oil retention) as a last resort.
 - Walking helps the circulation in legs and bowels.
- It takes **3 – 6 months for final results** to come in. In the interim, you may notice incision asymmetry and swelling. Be patient.

- A burning sensation along the abdomen is normal and indicative of nerve regeneration.
- Muscle spasms (sharp shooting pains) are also normal and can be calmed with Valium.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS

- It is important to be seen by Jackie (PA-C) after your initial post-op checks.
- Jackie (PA-C) will see you in follow-up appointments:
 - 1 week, 3 weeks, 6 weeks, 3 months, 6 months and 1 year post-op.
- If you are from out-of-town and cannot see Jackie at the recommended frequency, then it is strongly advised that you establish a relationship with a provider in your hometown who can follow your progress or evaluate you in case of infection, wound separation, or seroma. Jackie and Dr. Dubrow cannot evaluate you or treat you over the phone.
- Call to schedule your appointments at (949) 515-4111 between the hours of 8:30 AM and 5:00 PM to schedule an appointment.

Please call the office at (949) 515-4111 or Jackie (PA-C) at her cell phone at (818) 681-5882 if:

- Redness, increased pain at surgical incision sites, sudden increase in swelling, warmth, drainage (pus), or oral temperature greater than 101°
- Nausea, vomiting, rash, shortness of breath, or diarrhea after taking your medication
- Please call between the hours of 8:30 AM - 5:00 PM. If you need immediate care, please call Jackie anytime on her personal cell phone. There is no such thing as a minor question. I would rather you call me than wonder and not do the right thing, so please call my office, text me, or email me anytime.
- **IF AT ANY POINT YOU EXPERIENCE SHORTNESS OF BREATH, PLEASE VISIT YOUR LOCAL EMERGENCY ROOM PROMPTLY AS THIS COULD INDICATE A PULMONARY EMBOLISM (BLOOD CLOT IN LUNG)**
- Any questions in regards to scheduling or confirming appointments should be communicated with the office staff (not Jackie) at 949-515-4111. If it is the weekend, please contact your surgical coordinator (Maryam or Kim) with those questions.

Please include your name, surgery, date of surgery, and question in text message or voicemail.